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A COMPANION TO THE NERONIAN AGE

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For John Henderson

MAGISTRO OPTIMO
OB AMICITIAM ET MERITA EIUS

Contents

List of Illustrations xi
Notes on Contributors xiii
Acknowledgments xvii

Introduction: The Neronian (Literary) "Renaissance" 1
Martin T. Dinter

PART I Nero

1 The Performing Prince 17
Elaine Fantham

2 Biographies of Nero 29
Donna W. Hurley

3 Nero the Imperial Misfit: Philhellenism in a Rich Man's World 45
Sigrid Mratschek

PART II The Empire

4 The Empire in the Age of Nero 65
Myles Lavan

5 Apollo in Arms: Nero at the Frontier 83
David Braund

6 *Domus Neroniana*: The Imperial Household in the Age of Nero 102
Michael J. Mordine

7 Religion 118
Darja Šterbenc Erker

8 Neronian Philosophy 134
Jenny Bryan

PART III Literature, Art, and Architecture

9 Seneca, *Apocolocyntosis* 151
Christopher L. Whitton

10 The *Carmina Einsidlensia* and Calpurnius Siculus' *Eclogues* 170
John Henderson

11 Seneca's Philosophical Writings: *Naturales Quaestiones, Dialogi, Epistulae Morales* 188
Jonathan Mannering

12 Senecan Tragedy 204
Emma Buckley

13 Lucan's *Bellum Civile* 225
Philip Hardie

14 Petronius' *Satyrica* 241
Tom Murgatroyd

15 Persius 258
Marden Fitzpatrick Nichols

16 Columella, *De Re Rustica* 275
Christiane Reitz

17 Literature of the World: Seneca's *Natural Questions* and Pliny's *Natural History* 288
Aude Doody

18 Greek Literature Under Nero 302
Dirk Uwe Hansen

19 Buildings of an Emperor – How Nero Transformed Rome 314
Heinz-Jürgen Beste and Henner von Hesberg

20 Portraits of an Emperor – Nero, the Sun, and Roman *Otium* 332
Marianne Bergmann

21 Neronian Wall-Painting. A Matter of Perspective 363
Katharina Lorenz

PART IV Reception

22 Nero in Jewish and Christian Tradition from the First Century to the Reformation 385
Harry O. Maier

23 *Haec Monstra Edidit*. Translating Lucan in the Early Seventeenth Century 405
Yanick Maes

24 Haunted by Horror: The Ghost of Seneca in Renaissance Drama 425
Susanna Braund

25 "Fantasies so Varied and Bizarre": The Domus Aurea, the Renaissance, and the "Grotesque" 444
Michael Squire

Epilogue

26 *Nachwort*: Nero from Zero to Hero 467
Miriam Griffin

Index 481

Illustrations

Figures

19.1 Temple of Claudius, Model. 316
19.2 Drawing of the Opus Sectile Floor from the building above the Bagni di Livia. 323
19.3 Octagonal Hall in the Domus Aurea. 325
20.1 Nero, type 1. Paris, Louvre. Cast Göttingen. 333
20.2 Nero, type 2. Cagliari, Museo Archeologico Nazionale. Cast Museo della Civiltà Romana, Rome. 334
20.3 Nero and Agrippina AD 54. Cast. 335
20.4 Nero and Agrippina. Aphrodisias, Sebasteion. 336
20.5 Nero and Agrippina. Cameo. Cologne, Shrine of the Three Magi. 336
20.6 Nero, type 3. Rome, Museo Palatino. Cast Göttingen. 337
20.7 Nero, type 4. Munich Glyptothek. 338
20.8 Nero, Dupondius with destruction marks. Bonn, Akademisches Kunstmuseum. 340
20.9 Nero, Alexandria AD 56/7–59/60. 344
20.10 Augustus, Aureus LEGES ET IURA PR RESTITUIT. Cast, private collection. 345
20.11 Divus Augustus, Sesterce of Tiberius. 345
20.12 Divus Augustus. As. 346
20.13 Nero, AD 64–68. 348
20.14 Nero / AUGUSTUS GERMANICUS, AD 64–66. 348
20.15 Nero / AUGUSTUS AUGUSTA, AD 64–66. 349
20.16 Colossus of Nero, reconstruction. Drawing S. Bertolin. 350

20.17 Altar of Eumolpus. Florence Museo Archeologico. Cast Rome, Museo della Civiltà Romana. 352
21.1 Oplontis (Torre Annunziata), Villa A: viridarium (87). 365
21.2 Pompeii, Casa di Pinarius Cerialis: cubiculum (a). 370
21.3 Rome, Domus Aurea: Room (119), ceiling. 376
25.1 Detail of the vaulted ceiling in the "Hall of Hector and Andromache" (Room 129) of the Domus Aurea. 445
25.2 The "Room of the Golden Vault" (Room 80) in the Domus Aurea, as seen today. 448
25.3 Bernardino di Betto ("Pinturicchio"), detail from the Basso della Rovere Chapel in Rome's Santa Maria del Popolo Church, *c.* 1500. 452
25.4 Giovanni Antonio Bazzi ("Il Sodoma"), detail from the Convent of Sant'Anna in Camprena near Pienza, *c.* 1502–4. 453
25.5 Luca Signorelli, detail from the Cappella Nuova (also known as the San Brizio Chapel) in Orvieto Cathedral, *c.* 1499–1504. 455
25.6 Raphael and Giovanni da Udine, Loggetta of Cardinal Bibbiena, *c.* 1516. 457
25.7 Raphael and Giovanni da Udine, ceiling decoration of the first vault (south end) of the Loggia in the Vatican, with scenes relating to the Creation, *c.* 1517–19. 458

Maps

1 The eastern frontiers of the Roman empire under Nero. 87
2 Plan of Gymnasium and Baths of Nero (following A. Palladio). 320
3 Pompeii, Casa del Menandro: plan with location of mythological frescos. 373

Plates

1 Neronian Buildings in Rome.
2 Domus Aurea, Vestibule and Colossus of Nero – *Sol.*
3 Pompeii, Casa dell'Ara Massima: atrium (B), west wall.
4 Raphael and Giovanni da Udine, detail of "grotesques" in the Vatican Loggia, *c.* 1517–19.

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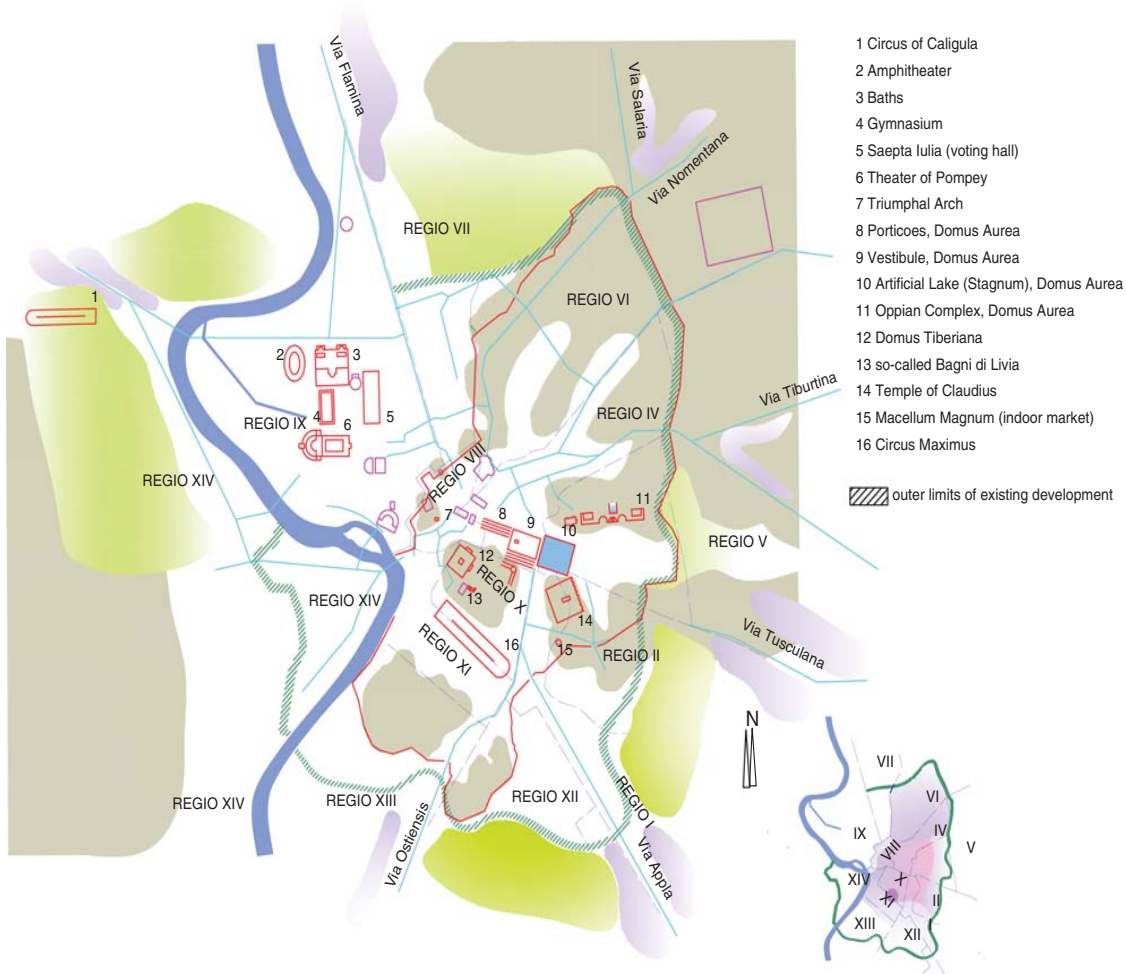

Plate 1 Neronian Buildings in Rome. *Source*: ©2012 DAIR H.-J. Beste, H. von Hesberg.

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Plate 2 Domus Aurea, Vestibule and Colossus of Nero – *Sol. Source*: ©2012 by DAIR H.-J. Beste, M. Schützenberger.

Plate 3 Pompeii, Casa dell'Ara Massima: atrium (B), west wall.

Plate 4 Raphael and Giovanni da Udine, detail of "grotesques" in the Vatican Loggia, *c.* 1517–19.

Introduction: The Neronian (Literary) "Renaissance"

Martin T. Dinter

> *Neronian literature, more than that of any other period in Rome, demands to be read in the shadow, or rather, glare of its ruler. The sun-king always penetrates the dark studies and rural retreats that confine Neronian writing . . . . In short, we cannot help reading Nero into Neronian literature.*
>
> (Gowers, in Plaza (2009) 174)

Depending on which myth of Nero the reader buys into, Neronian literature is either written in interaction with Nero, the most literary of emperors, who provides context and inspiration for literary output, or in spite of Nero, under Neronian repression, as a reaction to and refuge from the emperor's crushing weight. In any case, Nero constantly lurks in the background of any poet's production, or so the biographers and scholiasts tell us. The question of why we categorize literature and art as Neronian and Augustan, rather than Claudian, Caligulean, or Tiberian, for example, has as much to do with the fact that the chances of textual transmission have favored the former periods over the latter as with our tendency to group texts around the more memorable emperors. Thus although many of Seneca's tragedies might well have been written under the reign of Claudius to while away years of exile in Corsica, they are firmly counted amongst Neronian literature. Not only do they fit better with our image of the young and arty emperor than with the apparently ever so dull Claudius (but see Griffin (1994) and Osgood (2011) for a reappraisal of Claudius). They also go well with the rest of what we have of Neronian literature. Here, as always, periodization is inevitably a form of characterization which allows us to comprehend "a block of human experience" (Morris (1997) 96; cf. Lorenz in this volume), chopping the continuum of culture into chunks small enough to grasp and to discuss. As long as we recognize the artificial nature of this framework we will also keep in mind its provisionality. For as much as change was celebrated on the accession of Nero, succession is often (and in this case in particular)

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about continuity and stability. There were both practical and conceptual difficulties in cutting a sharp caesura between the reign of Nero's adoptive father and that of the young prince. We can catch a glimpse at the hopes projected onto the new ruler from Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis*, a satire the title of which suggests the "pumpkinification" rather than deification of the emperor Claudius, and from the *Eclogues* of Calpurnius Siculus, where golden age imagery hails the accession of the Apollo-like figure of a young prince – Nero! (see Whitton, Henderson in this volume).

As for us, the historians Tacitus and Cassius Dio, together with the biographer Suetonius, have drawn our image of the emperor through their writings and have mediated his story to future generations. None of them, however, is writing without his own agenda, and their relative hostility towards the last scion of the Julio-Claudian line has prompted attempts to unearth the historical Nero and to contextualize their slander (Griffin (1984); Barton (1994); Champlin (2003)). Thus the amazingly extravagant Nero who fiddled while Rome burned, had sex with a host of partners (including allegedly his mother of course, as "motherfucker" is the ultimate slander), and was a selfish child inappropriately obsessed with the "arts" and irresponsible when it came to governance is at least partly a literary construct of Flavian propaganda (Hurley in this volume), which looked askance on the abortive Neronian attempt to rewrite Augustan models of rule, from the imperial household out (see Mordine in this volume for Nero's "countercultural" domestic politics).

The only Nero we have is the Nero that was created (Martin (1990) 1558). And whilst the good emperor Nero, whose administration runs smoothly throughout the empire, whose religious observances are unexceptional (Lavan, Šterbenc Erker in this volume), and who scores military successes in the east (D. Braund in this volume) shines through occasionally, we owe much damaging material to Dio and his Byzantine epitomators' taste for the exaggerated and the unusual (Hurley in this volume); for the latter, Nero was an "exhibitionist," a "Roman curiosity," not a political figure (Gowing (1997) 2559). And if there are shades of moral corruption on display we can rely on finding the darkest black in Dio. This material is then picked up in the Judeo-Christian reception and employed to paint a satanic image of Nero (Maier in this volume).

Before Nero, the monstrous tyrant, was unleashed with the death of Agrippina, however, the sources concede a good *quinquennium* (a period of five years) to Nero's reign. In those years, the promising young emperor, having succeeded to the throne at the age of only 16, still follows the guidance of his dominant mother Agrippina, his tutor Seneca, and the prefect of the praetorian guard Burrus. The latter two also take on the administration of the empire, leaving Nero time to pursue his musical and artistic ambitions (alluded to by Calpurnius and Seneca in *Apocolocyntosis*) and to hone his horseracing skills. Suetonius actually praises the young emperor's initial virtues as duty to family, generosity, mercy, and affability (Suetonius, *Nero* 9–10). In addition, some of Seneca's prose output such as the treatises *On Clemency* (*De Clementia*) and *On Anger (De Ira*) has been directly related to educating the young prince in the manner of a "prince's mirror" (cf. Braund (2009) 78 for the literary genre and Mannering in this volume). Early on in Nero's life we can thus establish literature that centers on the emperor both with celebratory anticipation of his reign such as the *Apocolocyntosis* and Calpurnius' *Eclogues* and with educational support such as Seneca's treatises.

When ascending to the throne, Nero had had no military training (Fantham in this volume). It seems significant in this context that Suetonius starts his account of Nero's bad characteristics, disgraces, and crimes with Nero's training in music, and his obsessive studies with the citharode (lyre-player) Terpnus, who helped Nero to master the difficult and well-regulated art of singing whilst accompanying oneself on the lyre (*Nero* 20–21). His search for an audience that would appreciate his talent drove Nero to visit Greece, as he declared that only the cultivated Greek audience with their critical skills could do justice to (and were seen as deserving of) his performances (Suetonius, *Nero* 22.3–4). He thus swiftly ordered all six important Greek games, the Olympian, Nemean, Isthmian, Pythian, Actian, and Heraian, to be moved to the same year so that he could compete at (and win) them. His return to Italy was then staged as that of a victorious *imperator*, showcasing once more the priorities of the artist emperor Nero (Mratschek in this volume). Unsurprisingly Dio is rather critical of this expedition: "But he crossed over into Greece, not at all as Flamininus or Mummius or as Agrippa and Augustus, his ancestors, had done, but for the purpose of driving chariots, playing the lyre, making proclamations, and acting in tragedies. Rome, it seems, was not enough for him" (Dio 62.8.2–3, trans. Cary (1914)).

There is, however, a wider cultural context that made Nero's admiration of the Greeks and their intellectual and aesthetic achievements somewhat problematic in the eyes of the more traditional Roman (Mratschek in this volume). In the *Aeneid* (6.851–2) Virgil (through the voice of Anchises) sums up the Roman attitude towards their Greek neighbors as friendly condescension towards a nation busily at work with the arts but ruled (well) by others. That Nero begged to differ and sang, made music, painted, and sculpted might partially be due to his pedigree, about the Augustan side of which Suetonius remains eerily quiet. His maternal grandfather Germanicus had produced a verse translation of Aratus' *Phaenomena* and *Diosemeia*, two learned Hellenistic poems on star signs and weather lore, and his mother Agrippina famously authored memoirs (sadly lost to posterity) of her mother's life and the misfortunes that beset her family, possibly in order to win pity and favor from the public. It is no wonder then that Nero himself wrote – Martial even decorates him with the epithet "learned poet" (*poeta doctus*, 8.70.8) – nor was he the only upper-class Roman who did so. The Neronian upper classes were thoroughly engaged with literary culture, as the circles both Nero and Persius surrounded themselves with demonstrate. The anonymous *Laus Pisonis*, for example, praises its subject, the anti-Neronian conspirator Calpurnius Piso, for his poetic talent and musical performance with the cithara.

Nero's philhellenic attitude to and interest in the arts is a symptom of a world about to turn Graeco-Roman and which stands at the beginning of the great cultural shift of the Second Sophistic. Nero, from this perspective, was not just playing at being poet, but instantiated a new Hellenistic-style rulership, as shown not only by his personal taste for artistic pursuits, but also by the broader cultural program he saw through. This is in evidence in his architectural projects such as his Baths, Gymnasium, and even the *Domus Aurea* (Beste and von Hesberg, Bergmann in this volume). Nero's frantic building activity in Rome left a legacy not only in what remains of his oversized palace complex but also in the temples he built, the residential quarters he had constructed after the Great Fire, and the aforementioned structures he had erected on the *Campus Martius.* Many of these buildings were shaped by Nero's desire to implement a new concept of

leisure activities (*otium*) deemed acceptable for a Roman and some were even designed to encourage the populace to partake actively in these pursuits (Bergmann, Beste and von Hesberg, Mratschek in this volume). Seen this way, Nero's building programs begin to look less like shocking innovation and more like acceleration of a culture already shaping itself towards a Hellenizing future. Nero's influence on the visual arts shows this neatly: while imperial portraiture pushes the boundaries (Bergmann in this volume), Neronian "taste" more generally is far less distinct, showing more of a continuum with tastes prevalent under the emperor Claudius (Lorenz in this volume).

As to Nero's literary output we can much more easily define what the emperor did not write. Tacitus (*Annals* 13.3) laments the fact that Nero used Seneca as his speechwriter rather than penning his own speeches, as other emperors did. This might well have been because of a lack of ability or interest, but Suetonius (*Nero* 52) does not hesitate to blame Seneca for pushing the emperor away from the genre in which he himself excelled above all others. We know that Seneca composed Nero's eulogy for Claudius' funeral, which provoked much laughter, and that rather than speaking in the senate the emperor preferred to communicate his wishes by letter (*Nero* 15.2). Out of fear that he might damage his voice and throat Nero also on occasion refused to address the soldiers of the Praetorian Guard (*Nero* 25.3). There is but one speech which scholars think that Nero authored himself (helped by that fact that Seneca had died two years before its deliverance): on his tour of Greece Nero granted tax exemption and autonomy to the province of Achaia (the Peloponnese, eastern central Greece, and parts of Thessaly) in a proclamation made in Greek – unusual for a Roman emperor – at the Isthmos of Corinth in November 67 AD (see Sherk (1998) no. 71 for a translation). Whilst manifesting his philhellenism Nero here styles himself in the mode of Hellenistic king as benefactor (*euergetes*) of the Greeks (Mratschek in this volume).

Instead of oratory, then, the young emperor took to writing poetry, as Suetonius recounts:

> He was instructed, when a boy, in the rudiments of almost all the liberal sciences; but his mother diverted him from the study of philosophy, as unsuited to one destined to be an emperor; and his preceptor, Seneca discouraged him from reading the ancient orators, that he might longer secure his devotion to himself. Therefore, having a turn for poetry, he composed verses both with pleasure and ease; nor did he, as some think, publish those of other writers as his own. Several little pocketbooks and loose sheets have come into my possession, which contain some well-known verses in his own hand, and written in such a manner, that it was very evident, from the blotting and interlining, that they had not been transcribed from a copy, nor dictated by another, but were written by the composer of them. (*Nero* 52, trans. Rolfe (1914))

Tacitus reports how Nero incorporated this predilection into his daily life, but is highly critical of the group's poetic output:

> Nero affected also a zeal for poetry and gathered a group of associates with some faculty for versification but not such as to have yet attracted remark. These, after dining, sat with him, devising a connection for the lines they had brought from home or invented on the spot, and eking out the phrases suggested, for better or worse, by their master; the method being obvious even from the general cast of the poems, which run without energy or inspiration and lack unity of style. (*Annals* 14.16, trans. Church and Jackson (1876))

Lucan is the only member of that group that we can name, and he would share the deadly fate of the other two Neronian authors close to Nero's court, his uncle Seneca and Nero's *arbiter elegantiae* ("judge of taste") Petronius. Persius, who would certainly have been eligible by pedigree, was not part of this circle – a manifestation of the rejection of society and its standards on his part, one might speculate. According to an ancient commentator of Persius' work, however, the poet was well aware of the kind of output these literary circles produced and even quotes them. If this scholiast were to be believed, four lines of poetry and some snippets and half lines embedded in Persius' oeuvre (1.93–5 and 99–102) would stem from Nero directly. Unlikely to be Nero's lines, these samples might simply be a parody of the "Neronian" style demonstrating that Persius, although reclusive, was no cultural hermit without access to or knowledge of the literary fashion of his time (Nichols in this volume).

Overall, we only have fragments of Nero's poetic output and know about some titles. Dio (62.29) reports that the emperor performed a poem on the Trojan War, a subsection of which, it has been suggested, might have been the song about the "Capture of Troy" which Nero is said to have performed on the roof of his palace whilst Rome lay beneath him in flames (cf. also Suetonius, *Nero* 38). The little of Nero's poetry that has come down to us stems from Seneca's *Naturales Quaestiones* 1.5.6, which quotes a line on the iridescence of doves, and from the scholia to Lucan's *Bellum Civile* 3.261, which cites three lines on the submersion of the Tigris and links them with that passage in Lucan and lines 9–10 from Seneca's tragedy *Troades* (Mayer (1978), Dewar (1991)). This connection exemplifies on a small scale that the representatives of Neronian literature all draw on the same characteristic figures and diction (see further below).

Dio also reports on another planned poetic project of Nero's and the events that are believed to have turned Nero against Lucan:

> Nero was making preparations to write an epic narrating all the achievements of the Romans; and even before composing a line of it he began to consider the proper number of books, consulting among others Annaeus Cornutus, who at this time was famed for his learning. This man he came very near putting to death and did deport to an island, because, while some were urging him to write four hundred books, Cornutus said that this was too many and nobody would read them. And when someone objected, "Yet Chrysippus, whom you praise and imitate, composed many more," the other retorted: "But they are a help to the conduct of men's lives." So Cornutus incurred banishment for this. Lucan, on the other hand, was debarred from writing poetry because he was receiving high praise for his work. (Dio 62.29.2–4, trans. Cary (1914))

What this passage exemplifies is that Nero's interaction not only with his competitors in acting and singing but also with his literary colleagues was strained. Nero's extraordinary love for and ambition in the arts created an environment in which art and literature could flourish. As the authors under Nero harked back to their Augustan predecessors and revived forms and genres practiced in this period they garnered Nero's reign the flattering epithet of the "Neronian Renaissance" (Mayer 1982). His eccentric (to say the least) personal conduct and capacity for ruthlessness and brutality, however, ensured that the cultural boom he facilitated would not outlast him. Suetonius cannot resist reporting popular opinion about Nero as transmitted by the mocking of his subjects.

These verses provide in a nutshell the image of Nero our sources aim to convey, that of a mother-slayer, artist prince and megalomaniac.

> "Nero, Orestes, Alcmeon their mothers slew."
> "A calculation new. Nero his mother slew."
> "Who can deny the descent from Aeneas' great line of our Nero?
> One his mother took off, the other one took off his sire."
> "While our ruler twangs his lyre and the Parthian his bowstring,
> Paean-singer our prince shall be, and Far-darter our foe."
> "Rome is becoming one house; off with you to Veii, Quirites!
> If that house does not soon seize upon Veii as well."
> (Suetonius, *Nero* 39, trans. Rolfe (1914))

Of the many facets of the emperor Nero – good ones and bad ones – what the emperor himself seems to have valued the most were his faculties as an artist as manifested by his last words "What an artist dies in me!" ("*Qualis artifex pereo*"). As none of the Neronian authors managed to survive the reign of Nero, the emperor was arguably the last of them to go. His death thus signifies both the end of a dynasty and the end of a cultural epoch.

For the purpose of this introduction I shall attempt to connect a few of the dots that link the oeuvres of the three most prominent Neronian writers, Seneca, Lucan, and Petronius, to shed some light on what is at stake in the Neronian literary Renaissance.

The Neronian Literary Triad: Seneca, Lucan, and Petronius

Any attempt to ask what is "Neronian" about the literature and culture of the period is, in one sense, asking for trouble. The student of "Neronian" literature faces problems of dating, authorship, and authenticity (see, e.g., Henderson on Calpurnius Siculus in this volume; Whitton, Mannering, Buckley on questions of dating for Seneca; Hansen on contemporaneous Greek writers under Nero). And it is clear that there is a wealth of literature to which we simply do not have access now – in particular the learned "technical" literature, written in both Greek and Latin, that is the subject of the chapters of Reitz and Hansen. At the same time, the texts that have had the most profound influence on our perception of Neronian literature – Seneca's tragedies, Lucan's civil war epic and Petronius' novel *Satyrica* – share recognizably common themes, motifs, and imagery. As Lucan and Seneca were closely related, it might come as no surprise that their literary output features similarities. However, since even Petronius' writing showcases similar concerns, it seems fair to proclaim as "Neronian" a number of characteristics which pervade these texts. And while, for reasons of space, I must concentrate here only on these "central" figures of Neronian Rome, they exhibit a way of seeing the world which also finds its surprising reflection much further afield: not only in the distorted world of Persius' satires, but also in the strange, marvelous, and grotesque systems to be found in the works of natural history of Pliny and Seneca. (See Nichols, Doody in this volume.)

Readers of ancient literature have been primed to mine prefaces for key words and leitmotifs. These, in turn, help to form the reader's expectations of the narrative to come. When we apply this principle to the first line of Lucan's *Bellum Civile* the proem immediately yields three key concepts: "of wars worse than civil waged over the plains of Emathia [I sing]" (*bella per Emathios plus quam ciuilia campos*, 1.1, trans. Braund here and throughout; on Lucan see Hardie in this volume). First, in this epic we will have to deal with civil wars, wars in which no glory can be won as brothers fight brothers and sons fathers: from the first line of the *Bellum Civile* onwards the Homeric concept of *kleos* ("fame" or "glory"), which Virgil happily adapted for the making of Rome in the *Aeneid*, is undermined. Secondly we will not move towards Rome as we do in the preface to the *Aeneid*, which concludes with *Romae* in line 1.7 – Rome built in/on seven lines – thus pointing the reader straight to the end of it all (and Rome will lurk in the background for the rest of that epic all along). In contrast to Virgil, Lucan makes us witness the unmaking rather than the making of Rome in the first seven lines of his epic. With him we flee Rome in ever widening geographical circles and soon she will be but a memory of a city once great. Thus the epic's direction, at least for the first seven books, is towards Pharsalus – the Emathian fields of the first line – where we will witness the showdown between two great figures, Pompey and Caesar, both dubbed *Magnus* throughout the plot. This "Iliadic" first part of Lucan's epic full of battle and warfare is then followed by books featuring an "Odyssean" lack of orientation and closure (a reverse of the *Aeneid*'s pattern of Homeric influence). Thirdly this epic announces in its first line that it will be a literary comparative, a constant "more than" (*plus quam*), outdoing its literary models and sources. Lucan commits literary parricide and provides his readers both with an anti- and über-*Aeneid* whilst at the same time weaving the language of the other great "Augustan" epic, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, into his texts (von Albrecht (1970), Narducci (2002)). Accordingly, Lucan's epic constantly strives not only to be different from but also to be "more than" what we would have imagined. This desire manifests itself not only in some scenes memorable for their über-realism – arguably the reader is supplied with rather too much information in the cases of Scaeva's near death experience and Erictho's magic practices – but also in an epic language characterized by paradox and hyperbole (Martindale (1976), Bartsch (1997)), a feature common to all three authors I shall discuss here.

Metatheatrical, metapoetic or metaliterary comments signpost for the reader what the poet's aims are and what he does to achieve them as imperial Latin literature finds ways to communicate how it means to function. Often these comments help to define a poet's place in the literary tradition by illustrating his awareness of influence, his consciousness of the burden of the past. Accordingly, the desire of the Neronian poets to outdo their literary predecessors is often written into their output. From the outset Seneca's *Thyestes* thus announces crimes worse than those previously committed (Seidensticker (1978)): "Now from my stock there is rising a crew that will outdo its own family, make me innocent and **dare the undared**" (*iam nostra subit / e stirpe turba quae suum uincat genus / ac me innocentem faciat et* ***inausa audeat***) (*Thyestes* 18–20, trans. Fitch (2004), here and throughout; see Buckley in this volume on Senecan tragedy). Indeed a series of comparatives has built up the reader's expectations beforehand: "Has something **worse** been devised?" (***peius*** *inuentum est?*, 4; cf. ***peius*** *fame*, "**worse** than hunger," 5). In addition we are also briefed to expect something new: "**new** penalties" (***noua*** /

supplicia, 13–14); "if anything can be added to my punishment" (***addi** si quid ad poenas potest*, 15). Taking up this motif, the tyrant Atreus then spends considerable time devising the worst ever revenge on his brother (255–79). What is more, despite the promise to create something great and new we also witness a constant re-telling, re-writing, and re-phrasing of the literary tradition in Senecan tragedy, our sensitivity to which has been enhanced by the critical concept of intertextuality. Thus the initial question by the ghost of Tantalus – *in quod malum transcribor?* (13) – is not only meaningful in its immediate context: "To what new sufferings am I shifted?", "To what punishment am I being re-assigned?" It shifts to register also "Into what evil am I being copied? For committing what evil am I being reassigned to another writer?" When taking the metaphor of writing "literally," this verse also indicates that Seneca is here helping himself to a portion of the literary tradition (Schiesaro (2003) 28). Seneca thematizes this methodology of improving on previous writers at length in a letter to Lucilius (*Letter* 79) where he concludes that only pure wisdom cannot be bettered but poetry can.

Even in Petronius' *Satyrica* the famous *Cena Trimalchionis* (26–78), an eccentric and sumptuous dinner party of a parvenu freedman, can be boiled down to a line of extraordinary dishes, outdoing all others and enriched with a generous dash of spectacle (Murgatroyd in this volume). For sure, Petronius puts more extravagance on our plates here than his literary models, Horace's *Cena Nasidieni* (*Satires* 2.8) or Plato's *Symposium*. The level of the dinner conversation at Trimalchio's table, however, never comes anywhere near the philosophical heights of Plato (not for want of trying). The challenge to the guests' intellectual capacity is not to contribute to the talk but rather to be able to decipher the food. No need for philosophy here, you simply are what you eat, so you'd better reach for your napkin (cf. 33). One should, however, not simply cast aside the *Satyrica* as intellectually unchallenging. In its rather special way it presents a discourse on philosophy and morals, religion, and society, with a lot of sex thrown in for good measure (Murgatroyd in this volume).

A prominent and recurrent topos in these three Neronian authors is that of spectacle, of seeing and being seen. Just as the emperor Nero frequently put himself on display and was well aware of the powers of representation, so we find Trimalchio as well making quite an entry:

> We were in the midst of these delicacies when, to the sound of music, Trimalchio himself was carried in and bolstered up in a nest of small cushions, which forced a snicker from the less wary. A shaven poll protruded from a scarlet mantle, and around his neck, already muffled with heavy clothing, he had tucked a napkin having a broad purple stripe and a fringe that hung down all around. On the little finger of his left hand he wore a massive gilt ring, and on the first joint of the next finger, a smaller one which seemed to me to be of pure gold, but as a matter of fact it had iron stars soldered on all around it. And then, for fear all of his finery would not be displayed, he bared his right arm, adorned with a golden arm-band and an ivory circlet clasped with a plate of shining metal. (*Satyrica* 32, trans. Firebaugh (1927))

There are further indications that Trimalchio is the emperor of his household: he keeps his beard in a golden casket, just like Nero (29; cf. Suetonius, *Nero* 12.4), and has an accident involving a falling performer similar to the incident in which Nero was almost hit by a falling Icarus in the theater (54; cf. Suetonius, *Nero* 12.2). Yet there are

also more sordid things to watch in the *Satyrica*. For Petronius also makes us watch a character lustily gazing through a peep-hole in the wall at the deflowering of Pannychis ("Miss All Night Long"), a girl who "appeared not to be older than seven years old," in a mock marriage ceremony (*Satyrica* 25.3; see Murgatroyd in this volume).

In contrast, Senecan tragedy takes a darker view of spectacle and spectatorship and makes the reader witness many a casualty. This is often achieved through a vivid and overly detailed messenger report, which in the case of Thyestes (lines 623–788) describes the murder of his three sons, covering every detail and employing more than 10 percent of the play's verses in total. As the messenger sets out to tell the horrors he has witnessed he is still dumbstruck and haunted by the images he has just seen. Only when encouraged by the chorus does he muster the courage to speak:

CHORUS: Speak out and reveal this evil, whatever it is.
MESSENGER: Once my mind slows down, once my fear-frozen body loosens its limbs.
The picture of that savage deed sticks in my eyes!

(*Thyestes* 633–6, trans. Fitch (2004)).

In Seneca's tragedies revenge is not exercised on the tragic antagonists themselves but instead they are turned into spectator-victims (Littlewood (2004) 11). What is more, in *Thyestes* Atreus hopes for an even larger audience for his crimes and wishes that he could not only summon his brother, the father of the children he has murdered, but also the gods to the feast that he has prepared from their flesh. Thus just before revealing his cruel deed to his brother Atreus exults: "Indeed I wish I could stop the gods fleeing, round them up and drag them all to see this feast of vengeance! But it is enough that the father see it" (*Thyestes* 893–5, trans. Fitch (2004)).

Lucan showcases the theme of spectacle by creating scenes in his civil war epic in which "being seen" is the protagonists' main concern. In *Bellum Civile* 4 Vulteius and his men commit communal suicide on a raft in the amphitheater-like "*naumachia*," setting whilst surrounded by Pompeius' troops (cf. Leigh (1997) 4) whilst their dying wish is that their leader Caesar may see them. In *Bellum Civile* 8 Pompey dies whilst displaying in an inner monologue considerable concern about how the spectacle of his death will look, both to his family looking on and the world that will be deciding on his reputation (Dinter (2012) 59–60). In a way not dissimilar, Nero himself demonstrates that he is acutely aware of the powers of spectacle when choreographing the crowning of the Armenian king Tiridates (D. Braund, Mratschek in this volume). Spectacle and engagement clearly played an important part in Neronian Rome (Griffin in this volume).

A further aspect that links together these three Neronian authors is use of body language and the imagery derived from it. For Lucan, Rome has become a suicidal body whose limbs turn against her very self, a concept facilitating multilayered body imagery that permeates the entire epic and resurfaces in vital passages that he announces already in his prologue: "we sing . . . of a mighty people attacking its own guts with victorious sword-hand" (*Bellum Civile* 1.1–3). Not only does Rome dominate the world geographically, but Lucan succeeds in drawing in the entire cosmos thanks to employing the concept of *sympatheia*, a continuous application of imagery of the cosmic body's dissolution, such as global conflagration and inundation that mirrors the civil war on a cosmic level (Lapidge (1979)). This concept is equally at home in Senecan tragedy:

the earth is shaking, the sun darkens and the zodiac is in disarray when Atreus celebrates his godless feast as the play's final choral ode manifests (*Thyestes* 789–884). In addition, the problematic situation of Atreus' kingdom Mycenae is signified from the tragedy's very beginning by a drought (*Thyestes* 100–121). Petronius' *Satyrica* is full of literal bodies and bodily concerns, but he too merges the physical with the metaphorical. He translates cosmic imagery into food when Trimalchio presents and explains a zodiac dish that allows him to design and interpret the universe to his taste (*Satyrica* 35 and 39). It has long been observed that Trimalchio's household displays features that make him the centre of that small universe; time is thus measured in relation to the master's life (26 and 30), whilst his household also displays characteristics of the underworld, such as a Cerberus at the entrance door (29). Accordingly Trimalchio can be seen as a "Pluto figure," playing on the name's meaning of "rich man" (= *ploutos*) who sits in his own version of the underworld, plotting his funeral (*Satyrica* 71).

In Lucan's epic, in addition to the state body and the cosmic body we also find the human body and the military corps in disarray. During the battle of Pharsalus the landscape is carpeted with corpses. Caesar no longer walks on the ground but wades through heaps of dead bodies, which taken together form the prostrate Roman body on whose inner organs he tramples: "Caesar, you are walking still in a lofty heap of slaughter through the guts of your fatherland" (*Bellum Civile* 7.721–2) and "[Caesar] forbids the soldiers to strike the masses and indicates the Senate; well he knows which is the empire's blood, which are the guts of the state" (*Bellum Civile* 7.578–9). In Senecan tragedy the poetics of the body can equally communicate the literary and conceptual agendas at stake. As Seo (forthcoming) observes, "Each play reveals its own reigning metaphor in its portrayals of violence, that is, the particular pattern of imagery associated with violence will be consistent with and even constitutive of the themes of the play itself." Tantalus' eternal hunger which is paraded in the proem of the *Thyestes* thus manifests itself in Atreus' insatiable hunger for revenge and his cannibalistic cookery and the frightening satiety that Thyestes experiences after eating his sons' flesh (Segal (1983) 183–6; Seo (forthcoming)). The play's emphasis on *viscera* here reinforces the physiological "embodiment" of evil. For Petronius' novel, Rimell (2002) argues that the *Satyrica* can be read as a unified whole rather than as episodic jumble, despite its fragmentation. By exploring corporeality as a metaphor rather than just as an ingredient of the genre of the novel, she finds that the surviving fragments are connected by an imagery of disintegration, expressed through the pervasive metaphor of the literary text as a human or animal body. Trimalchio's aforementioned obsession with his own death and funeral (*Satyrica* 71) may well serve as an example. In addition, bodies, whether heavenly or otherwise, can serve as sources of knowledge in the dark and erratic world of Neronian literature. In Seneca's *Oedipus* we find that Tiresias and his daughter Manto perform an extispicy, the inspection of entrails for divination, in which the graphic disarray of the sacrificial victim's organs mirrors the upheaval of the state (*Oedipus* 353–83). Lucan employs a similar technique in the first book of his epic where a sacrifice so carefully prepared by the Etruscan priest Arruns goes horribly wrong. First his actions are accompanied by gloomy murmurs (*Bellum Civile* 1.607), and in the end the priest even prays that his insights may prove false (1.636–7). Finally he seeks refuge in ambiguity and silence (1.634 and 638). Ultimately the sacrificial body constitutes the only message communicated to the reader; all the information we gain is embodied in its

disorderly features (1.627–9). In contrast Nero links his human body and the body language of Roman topography as well as the state body when he is re-situating his own self at the heart of Rome in iconic form with the *Domus Aurea* and its golden Colossus statue of Nero-Sol (Bergmann in this volume).

What is more, Neronian literature displays a high degree of rhetoricization in style and content. Lucan's episodic structure and sententiousness arguably chops up the literary corpus and presents memorable one-liners ready to be excerpted and incorporated into new literary bodies (Bonner (1966), Most (1992), and Dinter (2012) 89–118, and for an example, see Lucan *Bellum Civile* 8.484–95). This feature can also be observed in Senecan tragedy where we find staged a discussion between Atreus and his attendant consisting entirely of one-liners that serve to characterize the king as über-tyrant:

ASSISTANT: You have no fear of hostile talk among the people?
ATREUS: This is the greatest value of kingship, that the people are compelled to praise as well as endure their master's actions.
ASSISTANT: When fear compels them to praise, fear also turns them into enemies. But one who seeks the tribute of sincere support will want praise from the heart rather than the tongue.
ATREUS: Sincere praise often comes even to a lowly man false praise comes only to the mighty. They must want what they do not want!

(Seneca, *Thyestes* 204–10, trans. Fitch (2004))

Lucan's fascination with the rhetorical potential of his chosen subject matter is on display from the very beginning, in his prologue. Here we find memorable coinages such as "kin facing kin" (*cognatas acies*, *Bellum Civile* 1.4) and Lucan's threefold milking of this very idea by literally opposing ***signa*** with *signis*, spelling out ***pares aquilas*** and lining up ***pila minantia pilis*** in the lines "and of **standards** ranged in enmity against **standards**, of **eagles matched** and **javelins** threatening javelins" (*Bellum Civile* 1.6–7). Whatever a reader travelling the epic tradition might expect from Lucan's epic, we surely walk away from his proem with the strong notion that we will be in for something a little unusual.

Neronian poets also display a tendency to illustrate and enhance the meaning of their verses through word order. To cite again an example from Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, the triumvir Crassus whose death removed the last obstacle for war is depicted as a living bulwark, as the personified "delay" (*mora*) that stays the war by keeping its two main parties, Caesar and Pompey, apart ("the only check to future war was Crassus in between," *nam sola* ***futuri*** */ Crassus erat* ***belli*** *medius mora*, *Bellum Civile* 1.99). The Latin enhances Crassus' in-between position through a hyperbaton, by placing him between the Latin words for **future** and **war** and delays *mora* until the very end of the sentence. That Crassus' position is of global importance is demonstrated by the following simile, which depicts him as the Isthmus that keeps apart antagonistic seas (*Bellum Civile* 1.102). Lucan sustains this geographical imagery even further, for after his death Crassus' blood leaves a mark; it remains a memorable blot on the Roman map ("but when in lamentable death Crassus stained Assyrian Carrhae with Latian blood," *miserando funere* ***Crassus*** */ Assyrias Latio maculauit sanguine* ***Carrhas***, 1.104–5). **Crassus** (in final position) seems to be substituted by the town **Carrhae** (in final position) whilst Lucan emphasizes the antagonism between Romans and Parthians by contrasting them twice

side-by-side at the beginning of subsequent verses (*Assyrias Latio* (*Bellum Civile* 1.105) and *Parthica Romanos* (1.106)). Petronius' novel contributes a made-up colloquialism, a form of "mockney," to the Latin literary language in his *cena Trimalchionis*. That he was aware of and happy to parody the literary predilections of his contemporaries such as high epic style and sententiousness can be seen from Trimalchio's offer of 16 pseudo-Publilian *sententiae* (*Satyrica* 55) and Petronius' (relatively brief) version of a civil war epic that has often been read in relation to Lucan's efforts (*Satyrica* 119–24; Connors (1998)). In addition under Nero, politics and literature converged when teachers of rhetoric became senators and Seneca, the son of a rhetoric teacher, turned himself into the richest and most powerful man in Rome (Mratschek in this volume).

Conclusion

This brief synopsis of some central figures of the period aims to give just a taste of the sheer energy of Neronian literature and culture. As my short discussion above demonstrates, Neronian authors did not write in a cultural vacuum. They shared their lives and times with an arty but aggressive emperor and his literary court, lives that will not have been left untouched by Nero. For most of Nero's literary contemporaries we have – apart from often anecdotal biographies – little basis for discerning any possible pro- or anti-Neronian tendency in their works which would inform the reader's perspective. All we can do is but wonder whether an author's choice of subject matter or genre in itself would have been perceived as provocative (or at least unfortunate) by the imperial court.

Such speculation about the provocative nature of literature and culture under Nero finds a very definite answer in any reception history of the period. A discussion of the impact of Nero himself, to say nothing of the reception of the groundbreaking literature, art, and architecture of the era, would merit another volume of its own. Yet in the final chapters of this Companion, we show a select sample of the power the term "Neronian" has to offer. Nero himself became a demonic figure to conjure with in the apocalyptic traditions of Judaeo-Christianity which managed to survive the persecution of the emperor (Maier in this volume); "Neronian" tyranny, as configured in Senecan tragedy, offered the impetus for tumultuous reinvention on the stages of Early Modern Europe, while Lucan's fight for freedom in the *Bellum Civile* became an iconic text claimed for all sides in the religious, constitutional, and political upheavals of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (see S. Braund, Maes in this volume). Squire shows how even the ruins themselves of Neronian material culture spawned a new and striking obsession with the "grotesque" that would structure and condition the evolution of figure and representation in the Renaissance and beyond.

Ultimately, then, the term "Neronian" works both ways: undisputedly part of a cultural machinery, undeniably "a product of its times," the literature and material culture of Neronian Rome is, suitably enough, also a transgressive force to be reckoned with, one paradoxically impossible to pin down within easy categories of definition or periodization. For an era and an emperor defined by a common compulsion to break boundaries, it seems only fair that in the end neither can be securely contained.

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PART I

Nero

CHAPTER 1

The Performing Prince

Elaine Fantham

The Training and Pastimes of Princes

Earlier this year I turned on the BBC television World Service to find an image of Prince Harry, the younger of the future crown princes of Great Britain, astride a polo pony in an exhibition game of polo at the Meadowbrook Club in Long Island. He was making a brief ceremonial visit to New York to lay a wreath at the site of Ground Zero and followed it up with some interviews and this unusual match.

Now polo is not a national game in Britain like cricket or football (soccer and/or rugger). It is mostly played under the auspices of private clubs and ordinary folk will only see it if it is screened because a member of the royal family is playing. The game is an archaic revival, originating in central Asia, brought to Britain from India in the nineteenth century and since modified. I would say that as an expensive game and a team game for the elite it is highly appropriate to a young prince, especially as it requires swift reflexes and skilled horsemanship. It invites comparison with the *Lusus Troiae* ("Troy Game") re-introduced to Rome by Caesar, a ritual event in which elite Roman youth performed intricate choreographed manoeuvres on horseback (Suetonius, *Divus Julius* 39).

Suetonius pointedly says that Augustus put on the Troy Game because he thought it a becoming and ancient practice for the nature of elite families to make itself known (*notescere*): so the game was directed to the self-presentation of future nobles and princes to the people of Rome (*Divus Augustus* 43.2). Virgil features the first instance of this game, its etiology so to speak, as a tradition of the Julian *gens* in *Aeneid* 5.548–78.

The point I want to make is that monarchies – new or established – develop an appropriate training for their princes, and an appropriate way for the young men to be presented to their subjects. The princes William and Harry both followed their public

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school with military training, and have served in the army; Harry indeed went secretly to Afghanistan to share the experiences of his fighting force, and afterwards trained to be a helicopter pilot. No one would criticize this choice, and most citizens would be content even with the far more symbolic military service or titular positions as commanders of military units.

Within the dynasty developed by Augustus Caesar the military training of the emperor's successors followed the republican Roman tradition which sent the youth in his first years of military service (*stipendium*) to serve under his father's command, or if the father was unmilitary, under a friend's protection. Nicolaus of Damascus' *Life of Augustus* records that Julius Caesar took his great-nephew Octavian and Octavian's best friend Agrippa to fight Sextus Pompey in Spain and was expecting them to join him in the Parthian expedition of 44 BC. Octavian in turn promoted the military career of his stepsons. Even if Marcellus was not healthy enough for combat – as may have been the case – both Tiberius and Drusus fought and became officers, fighting for Rome over 15 years, in Gaul, in Germany, in the Raetian and Vindelician Alps of Tyrol. Drusus led a naval expedition eastwards in the North Sea as far as the mouth of the Elbe, and was fighting in Germany as consul and commander when a tragic fall from his horse killed him. In a sense there was no gap between this first princely model and the first training under Tiberius in 8 BC of Gaius Caesar, born in 20 BC as son of Agrippa and adopted as heir of Augustus. In 20 BC Tiberius had led a diplomatic expedition to show the flag and recover the Parthian standards; in AD 1 Gaius went out to Armenia on a similar military expedition, while his younger brother Lucius went to command Roman forces in Gallia Transalpina. Both princes died – one of wounds, one of disease – but their place was taken by Drusus' son Germanicus (born approx 15 BC) and Tiberius' son by Agrippa's daughter Vipsania, also called Drusus. Imperator Augustus had Tiberius adopt these two princes as successors. Germanicus was commander in chief of the two legionary camps on the upper and lower Rhine when Augustus died, whereas Drusus had been sent out from Rome to the mutinous legions in Pannonia. These two events form Tacitus' opening scenario once he has passed Augustus' funeral and obituaries.

So there were Roman princes rising through the army for 60 years from 45 BC onwards and they would also occupy superior commands until the sinister death of Germanicus in AD 19 and suspected poisoning of Drusus in 23. Other potential princes survived, Drusus II and Nero, the sons of Germanicus (Gaius was still below puberty): but not for long. They were accused of treason by Sejanus, imprisoned, and starved to death.

As a result, from AD 23 onwards there were no princes posing as successors and thus serving as models to the young Domitius Ahenobarbus, who would become Nero over 30 years later. The Roman principate passed from the disillusioned and geriatric Tiberius to his immature and soon demented grandson Caligula, then from Caligula to his aging uncle Claudius without any major warfare or serious imperial generals. Nero, meanwhile, had grown up the neglected child of a dead and nasty (*detestabilis* according to Suetonius, *Nero* 5) father and a disgraced and exiled mother, reared by his aunt Domitia Lepida, or by her employees (the legendary barber and dancing master.) Born in AD 37, he would have been 12 when his mother was restored to power as Claudius' last wife, and was adopted by the emperor as soon as he reached the toga of manhood in AD 51, an event which paved the way for Nero's succession after Claudius'

opportune death in AD 54. When be became emperor at 16, Nero had had no military training; only the theoretical guidance of Seneca and Afranius Burrus, the honest Prefect of the Praetorian Guard. The young Nero is credited with two appropriate princely activities – participating in the *Lusus Troiae* (Tacitus, *Annals* 11.11), and advocating tax immunity for the Julian ancestral city of Ilium (*Annals* 12.58). But this seems to have been his last judicial speech: once beyond puberty and secure in power he would not compose his own speeches or even give them effectively. Instead, the role models of his dead grandfather and father would be ominously indicative. Nero's grandfather seems to have been landowner of huge grazing areas, and was already in his youth famous for his love of chariot-racing. While Suetonius suggests no scandal in this, his legendary cruelty was transmitted to Nero's father, who notoriously drove his galloping team over a child in the road (*Nero* 5).

Suetonius includes among Nero's disgraces and crimes his love of charioteering (*Nero* 20–21): an aspect of youthful character written into a narrative that starts from Nero's training in music, follows his apparently obsessive studies with the citharode Terpnus, and returns to Nero as singing performer after his words on charioteering (*Nero* 20–22). Suetonius begins with Nero's extreme enthusiasm, in his boyish talk as a fan of the chariot races – something predictable in any Roman – his constant attendance and pressure on the team owners to increase the number of race offerings and prizes. But soon the prince wanted more (a recurring pattern)... He wanted to race in person and have the public as his audience; he displayed himself to the common folk in the Circus Maximus, while using a freedman to wave the starting handkerchief. In describing Nero's trip to Greece in AD 66 (not treated in our surviving text of Tacitus which ends in 65), Suetonius offers details of Nero's chariot-racing in Greece and failed attempt to drive a 10-horse team at Olympia (not surprisingly he was thrown: cf. *Nero* 24.2). He also gives some attention to describing the spectacular imitation of Greek Olympic victors by Nero: as if he, too, had gained an eiselastic victory in a sacred game (i.e. one which entitled the victor to make a ceremonial entrance into the city), he breached the city walls of Naples, Antium, Alba, and Rome itself. And Champlin has rightly drawn our attention to Dio's account of the marvelous *trompe l'œil* of the golden sun charioteer depicted on the awning which fluttered over the audience, as if indeed Nero was the sun in his heaven (Dio 63.5.2): "When the audience looked up to the sun, they would see Nero himself instead – in fact the emperor's image very neatly preserved his people from the sun's burning rays and the stars around him indicated that his chariot was indeed a heavenly one." (Champlin (2003a) 118). The various artifacts, including coins, statues, and the colossus of the *Domus Aurea* now wore radiate crowns identifying their emperor not so much with Apollo as with the sun god himself.

While Nero's love for charioteering is certainly part of the story in Suetonius' catalogue of disgraces and vices, however, it occupies a relatively small part of the narrative. Such brevity can be explained in several ways. First, chariot-racing did not really scandalize Romans as did acting or singing, and professional charioteers were not legally disqualified like actors (Rawson (1991) 475–86). In addition, we can add to the fashionable glamour of Nero's famous grandfather the tales of Caligula's pontoon bridge over the Bay of Naples, which he crossed first on horseback, then in a two-horse chariot. Instead I want to concentrate on what truly scandalized orthodox Romans: Nero's public ambitions as a singer. This is an art which many of us enjoy as audience, or in performance as

amateurs. We can understand the techniques and how Roman vocal training differed from modern classical training. As a charioteer Nero was no doubt as stimulated by the risk and excitement of speed as by any desire for display. As a musician risk does not apply beyond the embarrassment of a failed performance, but despite Nero's reported nervousness his desire for self-display seems to have been insatiable.

Music and Musical Performance in Nero's Rome

First we should eliminate as an option for Nero as performer the immensely popular art of pantomime *dance*. Imperial pantomime increased constantly in prominence in Rome after its introduction by the celebrity dancers Pylades and Maecenas' lover Bathyllus in 22 BC. Fanatical partisanship over famous mimes was so strong that the association of senators and knights with pantomime dancers had to be regulated, but under Nero, who was an enthusiastic follower, the latter were recalled to the city from which they had previously been expelled by Tiberius (cf. Tacitus, *Annals* 4.14). Lucian (*De Saltatione* 63/24) has two anecdotes explicitly from Nero's time. In one the Cynic Demetrius condemned mime until a performance of the Ares and Aphrodite sequence from *Odyssey* 8 convinces him of the dancer's unlimited expressive powers: in the other Nero himself entertains a visiting dignitary from Pontus with a mime show. The dignitary begs the emperor to let him take back the dancer to Pontus so that he could communicate through his body language with barbarians who did not share any common tongue. But Hall, so expert in the singing of tragedy, is surely mistaken in seeing Nero as a performer, and not a spectator of pantomime (Hall (2002) 426; Champlin (2003a) 78–9 makes the same claim). Not only was Nero no dancer, but as a singer he had no use for pantomime, which was performed silently with closed masks that covered the mouth, expressing itself through gesture and body movement, and leaving the vocal and verbal aspect to the accompanying choral singers.

The problem is just how much credence we should give to the comments of both Suetonius and Dio that at the end of his life Nero was planning to turn to pantomime. Suetonius *Nero* 54 is the only time our sources use the word *saltare* (to dance) about Nero: we are told there of Nero's private hopes if he should survive the final rebellion, that he would appear as an organist (on two types of organ) and a bagpipe player (*utricularius*), and on the very last day become a *histrio* and dance Turnus. This is a significant choice, and I would not attempt to deny that Nero coveted the heroic role of Turnus the tragic failure. This role is not taken from tragedy or lyric, and so would be a natural candidate for dancing that could express complex and shifting emotional anguish. But this does not mean that Nero actually implemented his pipe-dream. Both Suetonius and Dio talk only of plans, and of Nero's jealousy of the mime actor Paris. "Nero ordered Paris to be slain because the emperor had wished to learn dancing from him but had not the capacity" (*Nero* 54 = Dio, *Epitome* 63.18.2). The Suetonian chapter is particularly scrappy and disjointed, but in either case we are not talking of any actual performances.

Roman entertainments both private and public involved instrumental music; Cicero's client Titus Annius Milo, tribune of the people in 57 BC, traveled with his own *symphonia* (chorus) and Seneca, in a letter describing gladiatorial shows, comments on the music

involved, recalling both the old-fashioned choruses of men and women accompanied by pipes, and the overcrowded modern choral interludes (*commissiones*), with a file of singers filling all the streets while the auditorium was surrounded by brass-players and every kind of pipe and organ resounded from the stage itself (*Letters* 84.10).

Leaving aside mythological dance, the art of singing took two forms at Rome; that of singing tragedy (all tragedy contained both recitative and monody, and all tragic actors needed to sing), and the far more creative art of the citharode (*kitharodos*, *kitharistes*). There are undoubted differences but also similarities, and it is more than likely that performers were not purists and borrowed techniques from other musical forms. Let us start with singing tragedy or tragic roles. Nero announced his first performance as Niobe, a role involving multiple lament for slaughtered children; his other favorites were "Canace in labor," Orestes as mother-killer, the blinded Oedipus, and the maddened Hercules. It is natural to compare famous operatic catastrophes – Wozzeck's killing of Marie and suicide, Jenufa's infanticide, the suicide of Madame Butterfly or death of Violetta in *Traviata* – but these are not often presented in singers' recitals, because of the cost of an orchestra, and I would suggest that it is difficult to achieve the emotional involvement needed for such tragic material in short installments in a concert hall. Were these operatic scenes traditional settings of favorite Euripidean and post-Euripidean tragic texts? They were performed in Greek. Hall (2002) cites both instances of papyri with traditional Euripidean settings, and named *citharodoi* who composed their own settings for the inherited text. These performances would be in character (hence Nero put on masks shaped in his own image or that of the woman he loved at the time; cf. Suetonius, *Nero* 21.3). Like tragic monodies they would be accompanied by a piper.

In contrast the citharode was a virtuoso. Hall has little to say of this art, because sources are fewer than for tragic singing, but citharodes were celebrities who might tour the Mediterranean world like the pre-classical Arion, or the third-century Stratonicus of Athens, who was both virtuoso and innovator: Athenaeus claims Stratonicus, who wrote his memoirs and was the subject of a monograph by Callisthenes, invented *polychordia* "multiplicity of notes" in unaccompanied harp-playing (think of Yo-Yo-Ma playing a Bach chaconne). He was also first to take pupils in harmony and to compile a table of musical intervals (*Deipnosophistae* 8.352).The typical citharode aimed to appear wealthy and entered the stage in the lavish costume of a star recitalist, holding and playing his own cithara. This was not a four-stringed lyre but a more complex instrument of seven strings, each with its own set of harmonics, and ancient music used a full range not just of major and minor enharmonic or diatonic modes, but of modes based on different scales called Phrygian, Lydian, Mixolydian, Dorian, Hypodorian etc. Myth made Apollo the inventor of the lyre, and so the first citharode, and he was often represented playing in a long robe with his hair flowing loose on his shoulders. He was a natural model for young rulers to assimilate to and Augustus, who once appeared at a notorious costume party "of the Twelve Gods" disguised as Apollo (Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 70), assimilated himself to the god. He allowed the myth to circulate that Apollo had impregnated his mother Atia in the form of a serpent, but more specifically he made Apollo *Citharodos* the patron of his Palatine temple: the cult statue in the cella was Scopas' version of Apollo as *citharodos*, as was the colossal statue standing before the temple. Finally, if more ambiguously, Augustus

had a statue of himself with the costume and attributes of Apollo set up in the Palatine library (on Augustus and Apollo, see Galinsky (1996) 215–20; see also Miller (2009)).

At Nero's accession Seneca's mock Saturnalian "Pumpkinification of Claudius" brings on Apollo to hail the prince's coming to power. As P. T. Eden puts it, "Augustus' identification with Apollo had been partial and discreet. Nero's became total and extravagant and gullibly and dangerously vain" (Eden (1984) 78):

> Phoebus adest cantuque iuuat, gaudetque futuris
> et laetus nunc plectra mouet, nunc pensa ministrat
> detinet intentas cantu fallitque laborem,
> . . .
> Phoebus ait "*uincat mortalia tempora uitae*
> *ille mihi similis uultu simiilisque decore*
> *nec cantu nec uoce minor*."

> Phoebus is at hand and aids the Fates with his song and rejoices in what is to come, gladly now wielding his plectrum, now furnishing the fated threads. He distracts the Fates with his song and makes their toil pass unnoticed . . . "*Let that hero surpass the span of a mortal life, that hero like me in features and in beauty, not inferior in either song or voice.*" (*Apocolocyntosis* 4.15–17 and 21–3)

Champlin (2003b), in a strong discussion of Nero's self-representation as sun charioteer, has recently revived the argument for dating Nero's adoption of the Apolline persona of the *citharodos* later than 54, and reads these lines in *Apocolocyntosis* 4 as a later interpolation (see also Mratschek in this volume). To my mind the most convincing and vivid of Champlin's arguments comments is that while 4.32 pictures Nero's *adfuso ceruix formosa capillo*, "beautiful neck, with flowing hair," no examples of Nero's coinage show him with the long hair of the citharode before the fourth series, in 59 (see also Bergmann in this volume). Once we accept this argument there is no other evidence to support the notion that he adopted his Apolline persona before his mother's death in 59. It is then consistent to understand that the teenaged prince who would bring in a new golden age (*talis Caesar adest, talem Roma Neronem / aspiciet* – "Such a Caesar is here, such a Nero will Rome look upon," *Apocolocyntosis* 4.30) was the new persona adopted by Nero, as Apollo *Citharodos*. He was thus hailed as OUR APOLLO by his newly founded claque of cheerleaders, the Augustiani. An anonymous epigram declares,

> Dum tendit citharam noster, dum cornua Parthus
>
> Noster erit PAEAN, ille hekatebeletes

> While our lord strains his cithara, and the Parthian his bow, ours will be Apollo the Healer, but theirs the far-hurler of the distant thunderbolt. (Suetonius, *Nero* 39)

Cassius Dio's ironic apostrophe at 62.9 to Nero as citharode describes him as smooth-cheeked (i.e. fairly un-Roman) and with the long hair of Apollo (even more un-Roman).

The citharode had to apply four skills; that of composer, that of poet, and the skills of both singer and player. He must first create his poetic text and set it to melody, then perform it. He would be busy enough handling his lyre, and we should assume he

carried no other stage-props (scepters, cloaks, etc.). Would a Roman citharode compose his text in Greek or in Latin? Would it be in order for him to repeat performances of his own composition? How could it not be, when so much artistry had preceded the public show?

And not just artistry. Orators and actors as well as singers, were expected to devote hours per day and years to training their voices. Our ancient sources are mostly rhetorical: the teacher of Herennius, composing around 85 BC (*Rhetorica ad Herennium* 3.20), Cicero, Seneca Rhetor, Pliny's encyclopedia, Quintilian on the art of performance (*Institutio Oratoria* 11.3). (See Wilson (2002): on Quintilian, see Fantham (1982).) But although these rhetoricians insist on the difference between their training (and aims) and that of actors and singers, they do not provide enough detailed information on voice training. For Herennius' teacher the aim was to improve the volume, flexibility, and strength (*magnitudo mollitudo firmitudo*) of the voice, all qualities as necessary for acting and singing as for orating. Declaiming strengthens the voice: strength and evenness will be built up if we begin speaking in a calm low pitch, sparing the windpipe as we also do by varying the intensity of a continuous speech and avoiding sharp exclamations and shouting, which harm the voice and offend the audience. We should practice uttering long phrases in a single breath, and declaiming both sitting down and lying flat. Hence Cicero, distinguishing the needs of orators and actors, acknowledges that the voice is essential to the orator, but counters this with a warning against becoming a slave to his voice like the Greek tragic actors:

> They practice for several years by reciting aloud while seated. Then every day before they are going to speak their lines, they lie down and gradually raise the pitch of their voice and after the performance they sit down and let it drop, moving from the highest pitch, all the way to the lowest, in a certain sense regaining control of it. (*de Oratore* 1.251, trans. May and Wisse; cf. Seneca Rhetor, *Controversiae* 1.16)

It had long been traditional to cite Demosthenes as an example of a speaker who cured his defects – a lisp on R (*traulismos*) and the tendency to stammer – by exercises such as speaking with his mouth full of pebbles (cf. *de Oratore* 1.260).

Pitch, then, was all important. It is disappointing that Armin Krumbacher's little book on ancient voice training is largely concerned not with training in singing, but with spoken delivery, as used with differing intensity by orators, reciters of poetry, and declaimers (Krumbacher (1921). There is one short section on vocal exercises (74–81) which transcribes from an anonymous late antique manuscript (*Anonymi scriptio de musica*, ed. Johann Friedrich Bellerman, Berlin 1841), an elaborate exercise which may nonetheless be the same as the practice mentioned by Cicero. In this exercise the singer runs up the scale (DO-RE-MI-FA) rising by an interval in each run until he has covered two octaves; then leaps directly from DO to FA in each key (*agoge*). In the second part of the exercise he descends in the same fashion (*analysis*). The exercises involving the fifth and the octave are now lost. In a different form of exercise the singer enunciated a series of note pairs each assigned a syllable: Krumbacher cites the slide from TO-A to TA-E, that is, e.g., from A to B and B to C; or alternatively TO-E (D to F) to TO-O. The pattern is of shifting syllables accompanying the shift of pitch. And pitch was clearly a major issue. Cicero reports (*de Oratore* 3.225) that Gaius Gracchus when speaking

(not singing) had a slave with a pitch pipe stand by him and blow the desired pitch if Gracchus' voice was losing pitch or if he was straining his voice.

But Suetonius actually knows about Nero's personal training methods, such as the lead plate he used to weigh down his chest while lying down and declaiming, his purges with syringe and vomiting, and his avoidance of foods that might choke him (*cibis officientibus*). Nero's voice, we are told, was small and husky (*Nero* 20.1 = Dio 62.20.2). It looks as though it was a failing to sound husky (*fuscus*) although the flaw might have appealed to some in the audience. On the other hand, Quintilian offers some more general precepts of discipline in training: sexual intercourse, he declares, restores the voice when it has sunk from clarity to huskiness.

Nero was not deterred from constant daily training because he longed to appear on stage. Similar details are gathered by Tacitus in his first discussion of Nero's passion for singing (*Annals* 14.14, dated to AD 59). But Tacitus is more concerned with Nero's abuse of his power to violate *decorum*, as in his promiscuous exposure of young noblemen on stage and equestrians in the arena, both achieved by shameless bribery.

In all the theater arts there was a careful social grading: between respectable composing and shameful performing (as when Caesar forced Laberius to act on the public stage in a play he himself had composed), between the dressed and naked body, conspicuous in arena combat, between private and public performance (Thrasea and Piso seem to have performed as amateur actors), and of course between the status of persons. It does not seem to me peculiar to Rome that elite critics found the exposure of imperial bodies so distasteful.

Both Tacitus and Suetonius offer similar details about Nero's first actual stage appearance; according to Suetonius his first appearance was at Naples, since it was a Greek city and had its own Games (*Nero* 20.2; not in Tacitus or Dio). Tacitus (*Annals* 14.1) records, "Last of all Nero himself trod the boards, trying out his cithara with enormous care and rehearsing as his voice-trainers stood by him" (*adsistentibus phonascis*). Nero surrounded himself with a military cohort and used as his herald the consular Gallio, Seneca's brother (he would later use Cluvius Rufus, the consular historian). But even for this first presentation he had trained a claque, the Augustiani, who boosted his singing with rhythmically coordinated cries of enthusiasm (on the Augustiani, see Suetonius, *Nero* 20.3; Tacitus, *Annals* 14.15; Dio 62.20.4–5). To increase his opportunities for singing at Rome Nero first sponsored the Juvenalia in 59, games to honor the shaving of his first beard, on the Greek model with contests in both Greek and Latin oratory, poetry, athletics, and music: offence was avoided by awarding him the crown for oratory, and would subsequently be avoided by Greek cities with a similar anticipation of musical crowns. In the following year the Neronia (Tacitus, *Annals* 14.20 = Dio 62.21), was founded as the first of the quinquennial games over which Nero would preside.

Some of the emperor's extremely nervous behavior as contestant seems to be associated with Nero's tour of Greece in 66, although the Greek games committees were already sending him the prizes for singing in advance, and he himself claimed that only the Greeks knew how to listen critically and deserved to hear him (Suetonius, *Nero* 22.3–4). He first ordered the presiding committees of the Olympic games to move their scheduled date forward by a year, and others to repeat games they had already held that year, so that he could perform successively in all four contests; Olympian, Isthmian (at Corinth),

Pythian (at Delphi), and Nemean. Suetonius reports that he did not even clear his throat (*exscreare*) and used his arm to wipe away the sweat from his brow; when he dropped his stick during a tragic aria (Oedipus?) he panicked and was only reassured when a fellow actor swore he had seen nothing because he was enraptured by the wild applause for Nero's singing (Suetonius, *Nero* 24.1). He spread criticism of living competitors and was so jealous of previous victors that he had their statues hauled away. Everyone knows the tales of compulsory listening: women giving birth in the theater, men climbing over the walls to escape, and Vespasian falling asleep at the wrong moment (Suetonius, *Nero* 23.2, 24.2).

From our three main sources we can assemble the acclamations Nero received from the Augustiani, who called "Glorious Caesar! Our Apollo, Our Augustus, another Pythian! We swear by your name that no man surpasses you." They acclaimed him "Pythian victor, Olympic victor, victor in the grand tour, universal victor." He had also evolved his own formula proclaiming victory, declaring before the Greeks that "Nero Caesar wins this contest and crowns the Roman people and the inhabited world that is his own" (Dio 62.20). Again when Nero entered Rome through the ritual breach in the walls which Greek cities accorded their own victors, according to Dio (62.20.5) the citizens cried out "Hail, Olympic victor! Hail, Pythian victor! Augustus, Hail to Nero our Hercules, Hail to Nero, our Apollo, the only victor of the grand tour, the only one from the beginning of time; Augustus, Augustus, O divine voice! Blessed are those that hear thee." As Champlin (2003a) has demonstrated, Nero's return to Rome was presented in the form of a triumph, with an array of his crowns, wooden boards inscribed with the names of the games, then Nero himself dressed in the purple robe and gold embroidered cloak of a *triumphator*, in the triumphal chariot which Augustus had used, holding the Pythian laurel, and accompanied not by his sons like a true Roman but by the Greek citharist Diodorus. The city was decked out with garlands, glittering with lights and fragrant with incense, and Nero did not stop at the Capitol but went on to pay a special personal visit to Palatine Apollo.

Acceptable Diversions / *Voluptates Concessae*

Tacitus twice applies this phrase to the quieter and less public alternative of poetry: unspecified in *Annals* 13.2 but used in 14.16 to introduce Nero's poetic activities. While these did not involve public performance, they are an aspect of his cultural display.

What do we know about Nero's poetry? Tacitus gives us a context and a criticism; Suetonius a response to that criticism, and Dio more than one context for its performance.

There is controversy about which lines of precious verse are actually Nero's and which merely parody him; we shall come to that last.

In *Annals* 13.2 Tacitus claims without specification that Seneca and Burrus tried to distract the prince with acceptable pastimes: what were these? In 14.16, he adds that Nero also pretended enthusiasm for poetry, so that his theatrical arts would not be the only ones known. Nero gathered together amateurs: persons who had some skill in such compositions, but were not yet generally recognized (*quibus aliqua pangendi facultas necdum insignis erat*, *Annals* 14.16). How amateur were they? The only man we can name is Lucan, a genius if a perverse one. Tacitus alleges that these young men brought

ready-made verses to pad out his versification, claiming that any reading of this poetry exposes its lack of continuous inspiration (*non impetus et instinctu uno*) and its hybrid style (*nec ore uno fluens*). Suetonius on the other hand returns to Nero's poetry, blaming Seneca for inhibiting Nero from oratory other than his own, so that the prince, inclined to poetry, happily and effortlessly composed poems, and did not publish other men's work as his own "as some people think" (*Nero* 52). Suetonius has seen Nero's notebooks and first drafts (*pugillares libellique*) with some of the best-known lines written in his own hand, making it clear that they were not transferred or dictated, but refined by many insertions and erasures and interlinear additions.

Tacitus also reproaches Nero as the first emperor incapable of delivering his own speeches (*Annals* 13.3.). Certainly Nero avoided oratory and speech-making, and his imperial debut, a eulogy of Claudius composed for him by Seneca, provoked such laughter he may well have avoided further public speaking. His explanation of Agrippina's deadly conspiracy was also Seneca's work. Nero communicated with the senate by letter, and on at least one occasion refused to address the soldiers of the guard for fear he would damage his throat (Suetonius, *Nero* 25.3).

Among the titles of Nero's poems note the cult associations of *Attis* and *Bacchantes*, assigned to an early performance on the cithara (Dio 62.20.3); Persius' unidentified quotations in 1.93–5 include a reference to "*Berecyntius Attis*," and 1.99–102 describes a Bacchanal, as the votaries "fill their twisted horns with Mimallonian booms, as the Bassaris about to behead the snatched up calf and the Maenad steering her lynx with vine tendrils redoubles the cry of Evoe! while Echo renews it in response" (see fragments 3 and 4 Courtney (1993)). If this is not Nero, it surely is a parody or pastiche of his style as already the scholiasts pointed out. Other shorter excerpts are less easily assigned, but the *Troica* seem to be well attested. Dio (62.29) claims that at a festival Nero came down into the orchestra and read his own poems about Troy. Because the excerpts made by Xiphilinus from Dio are not in fixed sequence we do not know whether – as the Loeb text suggests – this event preceded or (less likely) followed the great fire of 64, when Nero ascended to the roof of the Palatine imperial palace, and putting on his citharode's costume sang the Capture of Troy (*halosin Iliou*, as he called it), but to the spectators it was the capture of Rome. Courtney (1993) suggests this was a named section of the larger *Troica*, and Nero's poems may have been aimed at a very large scale, like Nonnus' *Dionysiaca* in 45 books. In this context Dio claims that Nero was planning an epic following all the great deeds of Rome and was trying to decide on the number of books this would require (62.29). It is reported that when he asked Cornutus (the friend of Seneca and teacher of Persius and Lucan) whether he should write 400 books, Cornutus replied that would be too many: no one would read them. So Cornutus was exiled (as he was, but probably for a more significant reason: see Bryan in this volume). The fragments of the *Troica* accepted by Courtney are preserved by Servius: we have a brief allusion to Cynthian Apollo as lord of Troy (Servius on *Georgics* 3.360) and lines quoted by Servius' commentary on *Aeneid* 5.370 with a synopsis assigning to Nero's *Troica* the story of the lost Paris' rediscovery at the shepherds' games, the hypothesis of Euripides' *Alexandros*.

Nero obviously wrote on Nature in the Lucretian sense; a line on the iridescence of pigeons (quoted explicitly by Seneca, *Natural Questions* 1.5.6) and three lines on the submersion of the Tigris, cited by the Scholiast on Lucan 3.261, who also notes the

similar verses from Seneca *Troades* 9–10, have come down to us (see Mayer (1978); Dewar (1991)). Both excerpts suggest skilful versifying and lively poetic imagination, but the Tigris quotation shows how contemporary poets were now all drawing on the same figures and diction. This was not plagiarism since they had been trained in *aemulatio*, overt imitation of their model by making minimal and recognizable changes: Gallio describes Ovid's emulation of Virgil as not stealing but "borrowing openly with the intention of being recognized" ([*non subripiendi causa, sed*] *palam mutuandi ut agnosceretur*, Seneca Rhetor, *Suasoriae* 3.7).

What has survived of Nero's poetry does him no discredit, but it clearly did not satisfy his restless mind. Suetonius reports that he also painted and sculpted (*pingendi*, *fingendi*, *Nero* 52), and much of his time as well as the literary record is taken up with the colossal enterprise of his Golden House which was expanding to fill the burnt out centre of the city with pavilions and parks:

> ROMA DOMUS FIET; VEIOS MIGRATE, QUIRITES
>
> SI NON ET VEIOS OCCUPAT ISTA DOMUS.
>
> ROME WILL BECOME A HOME: GO TO VEII, ROMANS –
>
> IF THAT HOME DOES NOT TAKE OVER VEII TOO. (Suetonius, *Nero* 39)

Nero's artistic aspirations entailed enormous expense: hence taxes and confiscations. His gesture of giving Greece immunity from taxation can only have exacerbated the resentment of the western provinces, or his neglected armies; they had not been enforced spectators or listeners to his art, but this did not prevent Roman soldiers and auxiliaries from rising up against him. As early as 65 the military tribune Subrius Flavus summed up Nero's offences against the *decorum* expected of elite civilians. "None of our soldiers was more loyal while you deserved our affection. I started to hate you when you became the murderer of your mother and wife, a charioteer and actor and arsonist" (Tacitus, *Annals* 15.67, trans. Yardley).

This article started by outlining the kind of sporting or artistic activity that modern constitutional monarchies find acceptable in a crown prince, and comparing it with the record of earlier Julio-Claudian princes such as Tiberius and Drusus, or Drusus' son Germanicus: men trained and needed for serious military service on behalf of the now middle-aged emperor. It is against these alternative patterns of behavior that we should measure Nero's evolution from early private indulgence in charioteering and singing to the lyre, and more decorously in poetic composition, to yield to his growing ambition to perform – that is to display himself – both as driver and singer in public.

We shall never know whether his natural vocal talents or his dedicated training achieved actual artistic success; what we do know is that he wore out his audiences. Was he as blind as Suetonius' anecdotes suggest to the real element of coercion and pretence inherent in his increasingly frequent public performances in both Italy and Greece?

Did he really expect that he could abandon his imperial role to become a full-scale all but professional international performer? We shall never know.

According to Plutarch's *Divine Vengeance*, when Nero died, he was originally turned into a viper (which destroys its mother by its birth), but a divine voice bade the

attendants turn him into "a vocal creature, frequenter of marshes and lakes" (*OIDIKON TI . . . PERI HELE KAI LIMNAS ZOON*, *Moralia* 567e). So Nero the singer became a frog: this may serve as a final judgment on his stage and competitive performances.

FURTHER READING

Both Griffin and Mratschek in this volume will provide further facets on Nero the artist. In addition see Champlin (2003a and 2003b). On actors in the ancient world in general, see Easterling and Hall (2002).

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CHAPTER 2

Biographies of Nero

Donna W. Hurley

The Nero whom we know and whom we love to be aghast at fiddled while Rome burned, had bizarre sex with a stable of partners (including his mother), and was amazingly extravagant. A selfish child inappropriately obsessed with the "arts," he was irresponsible when it came to governance. A cruel tyrant whose viciousness was revealed over time, he did not bear up under adversity. This characterization is communicated to us first and foremost in the writings of two historians, Cornelius Tacitus and Cassius Dio Cocceianus, and one biographer, Suetonius Tranquillus. Their writings stand between us and the historical Nero, whoever that may be (Griffin (1984) attempts to tease an historical Nero from the myth; Champlin (2003) provides context for his behavior; Barton (1994) relates the tradition to conventional invective).

The First Assessments

The Nero myth had, however, taken form before Tacitus, Suetonius, and Dio wrote. Tacitus makes his dependence on earlier historians clear:

> Fabius Rusticus is behind the story that orders were written to Caecina Tuscus giving him command of the Praetorian Guard but that Burrus maintained his position with the help of Seneca. Pliny and Cluvius report that trust in [Burrus] was never in doubt. Of course, Fabius is inclined to praise Seneca with the aid of whose friendship he flourished. (*Annals* 13.20.2)

Tacitus not only names three historians whose work he was using when he wrote about Nero in his *Annals* but also reveals that the three had already interpreted the information they were passing on and that they did not always agree. He continues to identify

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the three sporadically (*Annals* 14.2.1–2, 15.53.4, 15.61.3). It is generally accepted that Tacitus, Suetonius, and Dio depended on a common source or sources but were essentially independent of one another, and it is further accepted that they took the bulk of their information about Nero from the elder Pliny, Cluvius Rufus, and Fabius Rusticus (see Syme (1958) 292–4, 689–92; Griffin (1984) 235–7; Champlin (2003) 40–44). Although they may have augmented these earlier histories (now lost) with memoirs, documents, and hearsay and superimposed their own interpretations and emphases, they leaned heavily on them. What we know about these writers whom Tacitus has so helpfully named is limited.

We know the most about Pliny the Elder (Gaius Plinius Secundus: see Doody in this volume). Pliny wrote prolifically; among his other works, his *Natural History* contains 37 books and his lost *German Wars* and *History* had 20 and 31 respectively. This last began at an unknown point before the reign of Nero and continued beyond it long enough to touch on Vespasian (Pliny, *Letters* 3.5.1–7). Pliny finished writing it during Vespasian's reign (AD 69–79) but declined to publish it before his own death because he did not want to appear to be flattering the emperor (*Natural History* preface 20). It obviously favored the new Flavian dynasty. Pliny thought Nero no fit successor to Claudius (*Natural History* 7.45–46, 22.92).

Tacitus, in the memoir of his father-in-law that he wrote shortly after the death of Domitian, expressed great admiration for Fabius Rusticus, the "most eloquent of recent authors" (*Agricola* 10.3), and Quintilian evidently spoke favorably of him late in Domitian's reign (*Institutio Oratoria* 10.1.104). Fabius, like Pliny, wrote under the Flavians and as a protégée of Seneca was necessarily critical of Nero (*Annals* 14.2.2). The parameters of his history, if it was indeed history that he wrote, are not known. His contribution may have been a monograph on Seneca (Sage (1990) 1015).

The consular Cluvius Rufus was an intimate in Nero's court (Suetonius, *Nero* 21.2; Dio 63.14.3). His history evidently reached back to the reign of Gaius (Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 19.92) and continued into the civil war period that followed Nero's death (Plutarch, *Otho* 3). He too wrote under the Flavians (Pliny, *Letters* 9.19.5) but may have been somewhat less hostile to Nero than were Pliny and Fabius. (See Syme (1958) 294; Griffin (1984) 236; Wiseman (1991) 111; Champlin (2003) 43–4.)

The opaque scrim that covers the lost works of these historians is an unfortunate reality. Their individual contributions to the Nero tradition can be only minimally disentangled (see the attempts of e.g. Questa (1963), Townend (1960)) and we must ultimately be satisfied with the Nero story as Tacitus, Suetonius, and Dio tell it. Still, it is not really possible to understand their largely hostile appreciations of Nero without an awareness of the earlier histories that appeared soon after the emperor's death, apparently within 10 years (Syme (1958) 293). Favorable assessments written during his lifetime (Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 20.154) dissipated quickly. Pliny, Cluvius, and Fabius wrote under the influence of the new Flavian dynasty whose legitimacy was being defined by the illegitimacy of the deposed Nero and whose sobriety could be contrasted with the flamboyance of the reign just past. All three appear to have told roughly the same story; the only Nero we have is the Nero they created (Martin (1990) 1558). Tacitus and Suetonius wrote Nero's story within a short time of one another in the second and early third decades of the second century, 40–50 years after his death, and represent a second

generation of the historiography of his reign. Our interest gravitates to their offerings, but the place to begin is with Cassius Dio, who did not write until a hundred years later.

Cassius Dio

The consular historian Cassius Dio Cocceianus wrote in the second and third decades of the third century AD (Barnes (1984); Edmonson (1992) 27–28). A native of Pontus-Bithynia on the Black Sea, he was the author of *Roman History*, 80 books written in Greek that covered Rome from its founding to AD 229, his own day. Part of this lengthy work has survived as he wrote it, the portion that covers the years from 69 BC to AD 46, but much of the rest, including all of the Nero years (books 61–63), survives only in the extracts and summations made by Byzantine scholars of the Middle Ages. Dio writes that he gathered his evidence from reading, hearsay, and autopsy (*Roman History* 53.19.6), but with Nero, only the first of these was really possible. Similarities with Tacitus and Suetonius show that his written sources were theirs as well. He acknowledges more than one source for the Nero years (61.11.4, 12.1; 63.17.5), but since he has many unpleasant things to say about Nero's tutor Seneca (61.10.1, 12.1, 20.3; 62.2.1), the work of the Seneca-friendly Fabius Rusticus was probably not one of them. Dio was plausibly acquainted with the work of Tacitus and Suetonius but chose to seek out what he would have thought more authentic texts, those closer to events, first-generation rather than second-generation informants.

Dio's method was, first of all, a selection process, for even a generous 80 books made choices necessary for a history that covered a thousand years. He selected what he, as a high-ranking government insider of the early third century, thought was important and what he thought was interesting, and his choice reveals his taste and the taste of his age. To this he might add his own opinion (see, e.g., 53.19.6, 61.10.5). His Byzantine epitomators, in their turn, in an attempt to make the lengthy work accessible, selected what they thought important and interesting. Hence, what we have in Dio's extant text is the Nero story of the Flavian historians filtered once through Dio's taste and a second time through the taste of the Byzantine Middle Ages.

Despite this recognition that the text of Dio's *Roman History* is a selection of selections, a great deal of the Nero story does remain. Detail is found in his *History* that is not seen elsewhere. Tacitus, for instance, writes that members of the upper classes took part in Nero's Juvenalia (*Annals* 14.15) and Suetonius that old men and women participated (*Nero* 11.1); only Dio reports that an octogenarian named Aelia Catella danced (61.19.2). Suetonius passes her over because he does not usually include non-essential names in his Julio-Claudian lives, and Tacitus did not think Aelia Catella significant for his examination of waning senatorial influence. Dio, however, and his epitomators did. Dio's vivid description of the behavior of citizens during the Great Fire in Rome in AD 64 may be his own particularization of the confusion that raged (62.16.2–7), but his report that Nero sent out agents pretending to be drunk and rioting to set fires at multiple sites must be detail preserved from his sources (62.16.2). Especially welcome is his account of the last two years of Nero's life, for Tacitus' *Annals* breaks off in the middle of AD 66, and Dio's *Roman History* is our only chronological record of Tiridates' visit to Rome, Nero's tour of Greece, and his return to Rome in an artistic triumph.

Dio's inclusion of events on the British frontier and in Armenia, events in which the emperor was not personally involved, are evidence that the Flavian source histories did not neglect foreign affairs. How this material was distributed in them we do not know, but in Dio's work they are gathered into two frontier interludes, first the uprising in Britain, (62.1–12) and then affairs in the east (62.19–23). Dio composes two stirring speeches for the British warrior queen, Boudicca. In one she inspires her people by reviewing the wrongs done them by the too-civilized Romans (62.3–5), and in a second she denigrates Nero as effeminate (62.6). Affairs in the east revolve around the general in command, Gnaeus Domitius Corbulo, a man of antique virtue, who would have made a worthy emperor (62.19, 23.5; 63.6.4) and whom Nero finally ordered to be executed (63.16.5–6). But these external elements do not stray from Dio's focus. His Corbulo is a foil for the non-military and unworthy Nero, and Boudicca's speeches draw attention back to Rome and to the emperor.

Dio is more aggressively hostile to Nero than either Tacitus or Suetonius and is less hesitant about expressing his hostility. He states flatly, for instance, that Nero viewed the body of his dead mother and admired her beauty (61.14.2). Suetonius is cautious, writing that "trustworthy authorities" alleged the inappropriate viewing (*Nero* 34.4). Tacitus takes account of disagreement, with "some have transmitted it; some have denied it" (*Annals* 14.9.1). Dio's outright statement is the most damaging. He also writes a speech for Vindex (Julius Caesar Vindex, leader of the insurrection that toppled Nero) that excoriates the emperor (63.22.3–6). He delights in the exotic dress of Boudicca (62.2.3–4) and in Poppaea Sabina's extravagant grooming (62.28.1), and his Nero dresses aging racehorses in human clothing (61.6.1). The "good" Nero who puts in an appearance in Tacitus and Suetonius is scarcely to be found in Dio's *History* – in a few sentences only (61.3.1). Both the Greek Dio and his Byzantine epitomators appear to have had a taste for the exaggerated and the unusual. That was what they found important and interesting and worth preserving. Dio's Nero was an "exhibitionist," a "Roman curiosity," not a political figure (Gowing (1997) 2559).

Dio's rendering of the Nero story comes close to being biography, the genre that Arnaldo Momigliano defined simply as "an account of the life of a man from birth to death" ((1993) 11). But it did not cross the line. His Nero books (61–3) begin as proper history in the year AD 54, the year of Claudius' death and Nero's accession (61.1). But he doubles back promptly to the signs and portents that accompanied Nero's birth and predicted the character of his regime (61.2). The next chapters (61.3–5) are a selection of actions that permit generalization about his character. Then, finished with this preamble, Dio begins his history year by year; "Such was Nero's general character. I shall now proceed to details" (61.6.1: trans. Cary). At the end of his Nero books come omens predictive of death and death itself (63.28–29.2), followed by the calculation of the length of the emperor's life and of his reign and closing remarks (63.29.3). This is Dio's procedure with all the Julio-Claudian emperors (Edmondson (1992) 36–7). Earlier portions of the Nero story, events of his boyhood (his adoption by Claudius and marriage to Octavia, his mother's ambition to bring him to the throne) are reported where they belong as part of the Claudius story and are not displaced into the Nero years (60.31.8, 32.2, 33.2^2, 9–11, 34.1). Otherwise, this is very like biography. Christopher Pelling calls Dio's organization "biostructuring," a kind of intermediate compromise (Pelling (1997) 117–25), not quite Momigliano's "account of the life of a man from

birth to death'' but still very much centered on an individual. A beginning with birth and birth omens and a generalizing characterization at the opening are Dio's own strategy, but the movement toward biography was present in the sources he worked from, for Tacitus, for all his efforts to write a history of a time and not of an individual, was not immune.

Tacitus

Cornelius Tacitus was born in the mid or late 50s AD, was suffect consul in AD 97 and governor of the province of Asia in 112–13. His was a distinguished career. By about 110 he had written the books we call his *Histories* that cover the period from AD 69 to the death of Domitian in 96; he then retreated to another starting point with the death of Augustus (AD 14) and began the books called *Annals* that cover the reigns of Tiberius, Gaius, Claudius, and Nero. It is unclear when he finished them, if he ever did. He may have continued writing into the reign of Hadrian, who became emperor in AD 117 (Birley (2000) 246). The books of the *Annals* appear to be organized by hexads, groups of six, the first hexad about Tiberius, and the second, of which a good bit has been lost, about Gaius and Claudius. Nero is the central character of the concluding six books that begin with book 13. It opens almost like a new work: ''The first death of the new regime was that of Junius Silanus'' (*Annals* 13.1.1). But the *Annals*, as we have them, break off in the middle of book 16, in AD 66, two years before Nero's death. Much is missing – the visit of Tiridates, Nero's tour of Greece, and his death; a full six books would be necessary to complete the story, whether or not they were ever written.

Tacitus inserted the source histories written by Pliny, Cluvius Rufus, and Fabius Rusticus into his own politically charged rhetoric. A member of the elite, he viewed the consolidation of imperial power as taking place at the expense of the *libertas* of the senatorial class (Morford (1990) 1599; Rubiés (1994) 37), and his choice of an annalistic structure suggests an attempt to make his history conform to a republican tradition. He dates the years by the names of the ordinary consuls, domestic events alternate with interludes of foreign affairs in the manner of Livy, and years are summed up with obituaries of important persons. Chronology has not been tampered with. His Nero books do not have Dio's ''biostructure.'' The first action of book 13 is Nero's funeral oration for the dead Claudius. There are no birth omens for the new emperor here and no summarizing character sketch. Nero's adoption, his conflict with Britannicus, and his marriage to Octavia are described in the Claudian books where they belong; the portent of the snake found in his infant bed finds a place there too (*Annals* 11.11.2–3; 12.25, 41.1–2, 58.1). Still, books 13–16 can be called ''Nero books.''

To further ensure that he was writing history, not biography, Tacitus embeds the Nero story quite thoroughly in matters in which the emperor was not closely involved, matters both foreign and domestic. Dio, as noted, gathers events of the Roman frontier into two narratives, one for Britain, another for the eastern theater, and he names foreign potentates and locates sites in abundance, but his speech for Boudicca that attacks Nero's weaknesses and his overt comparison of Nero with Corbulo bring foreign affairs back home. Tacitus, on the other hand, distributes foreign affairs throughout his Nero books: Matters are settled in lower Germany (AD 58; *Annals* 13.53–7); the uprisings in Britain in AD 61 include a call to battle from Boudicca that does not castigate Nero

(*Annals* 14.29–39); affairs in the east take place in the years AD 54, 58, 60, 62, and 63 (*Annals* 13.6–9, 34–41; 14.23–6; 15.1–17, 24–31). Comparison between Nero and Corbulo is implicit, but Tacitus keeps foreign affairs discreet and adds bulk to the military campaigns by using Corbulo's own memoirs to expand the non-Nero part of the story (*Annals* 15.16.1). Important things were taking place, things not directly derived from Nero's actions.

Tacitus also includes events that took place in Rome on Nero's watch, events that could be referred to him only marginally or not at all. A slave kills his master, and Tacitus writes for Gaius Cassius Longinus, a prominent jurist, a speech that justifies the practice of punishing the entire household in reprisal. The detailed exploration of this issue maintains the impression that Roman tradition is still viable (*Annals* 14.42–5). Information from the senatorial record (*acta senatus*) has the same effect (*Annals* 15.74.3). Tacitus' use of the *acta*, an idea championed by Syme ((1958) 280–6, 296), is no longer controversial (see Talbert (1984) 23–34; Morford (1990) 1594–7). All of the events of the uneventful year of AD 57 may have been found in that record (*Annals* 13.31–3) and so can perhaps the obituaries that end some years. This material notwithstanding, the *Annals* edge, seemingly inexorably, in the direction of biography.

Progress through Nero's reign year by year allows space for character development, or more accurately, for the unmasking of character, since the seeds of what Nero would become were present from the beginning. Tacitus hints at "hidden vices" (*Annals* 13.1.3) in the first chapter of the Nero books. The young emperor's mentors, Afranius Burrus and Annaeus Seneca, try to rein in his "slippery nature" (13.2.1). His reign nonetheless appeared to begin well. Nero made good appointments in order to respond to troubles in the east (13.6–9) and sensible rulings in regard to taxes (13.50–51). He behaved with modesty, forbidding statues of gold and silver for himself (13.10). He exercised clemency (13.11, 33, 52), was fair to freedmen (13.26–7), controlled civil disorder (13.25.4; 13.48), and rebuilt Rome after the Great Fire of AD 64 with provision for fire control in the future (15.43.1–2). Much (not all) of what Tacitus puts on the positive side of the ledger comes before the end of book 13 and before the year AD 59. By late antiquity the idea had arisen that Nero had had a good *quinquennium*, a five year period of good rule. (See Aurelius Victor's *Liber de Caesaribus* (5.2–4) and the anonymous *Epitome de Caesaribus* (5.2–5): the emperor Trajan is supposed to have declared that Nero had been the equal of Augustus for five years. That this was probably a fiction has not prevented attempts to locate five good years together, the first five years of his principate or the years that end in AD 62: see Griffin (1984) 83–4.) Suetonius includes items that he calls "not bad" (*nulla reprehensione*; *Nero* 19.3) but without time reference. Dio provides the barest hint of what one might call a neutral assessment of his outrageous emperor (61.3.1).

Despite Tacitus' placement of Nero against a wider backdrop and his allowance for the revelation of character, his *Annals* and Dio's *Roman History* often mirror one another and reveal their shared origins (Gowing (1997) 2563). They contain the same sequence of tableaux (Martin (1990) 1578), but Tacitus' more expansive and creative treatment of the episodes enriches his work and opens the way to more interesting readings. He was usually less interested in their more extravagant moments but more in relating them to larger themes and in describing motivation and reaction.

One such tableau is the poisoning of Britannicus (*Annals* 13.15–17). Tacitus makes it a vehicle for the theme of Nero's legitimacy – or rather illegitimacy – a central idea in

the story. He expands the setting for the poisoning story that is missing in Dio (61.7.4) and minimal for Suetonius (*Nero* 33.2–3) and adds motivation: Nero determined to kill his brother Britannicus after the latter gained sympathy when he sang about his stolen birthright (*Annals* 13.15.2). And he reports that Nero raped Britannicus before he killed him (*Annals* 13.17.2). When Tacitus describes the banquet at which the poisoning took place, he emphasizes the emotional atmosphere, the horrified reactions of Agrippina and Octavia and the other guests (*Annals* 13.16.3–4). Britannicus, not Nero, is named as the true or legitimate Caesar (*ueram dignamque stirpem*; *Annals* 13.14.2), the last trace of Claudian blood (*illum supremum Claudiorum sanguinem*; *Annals* 13.17.2).

This theme of Nero the usurper was in no way exclusive to Tacitus but must have been key in one or more of the lost Flavian histories since it surfaces repeatedly. Adoption into the proud Claudian family was unprecedented (*Annals* 12.25.2; Suetonius, *Claudius* 39.2). Britannicus taunts Nero by calling him by his birth names, Domitius or Ahenobarbus (*Annals* 12.41.3; *Nero* 7.1), and so does Vindex (*Nero* 41.1). In self-defense, Nero tries to convince Claudius that Britannicus is a changeling (*Nero* 7.1). Claudius, near the end of his life, says that he intends to restore Britannicus' position "in order that the Roman people may have a 'true Caesar' " (Suetonius, *Claudius* 43). Pliny the Elder in his *Natural History* consistently calls Nero "Domitius Nero" (2.92; 4.10, 22; 7.45, 71; 11.238; 37.50) but "Nero Caesar" only once (13.126). Both Nero's illegitimacy and the extermination of the Claudian line are central in the pseudo-Senecan *Octavia*, the drama of unknown authorship that came, like the Flavian histories, from a time not long after Nero's death. Nero, born of a Domitian father (*Domitio genitus patre*) has been "grafted" (*insitivus*) onto the imperial family (*Octavia* 249). Tacitus makes the substitution of Nero for the legitimate Britannicus the focus of the poisoning story.

However sober a historian of the age Tacitus proposed to be, he could not resist telling the story of Agrippina's murder with its collapsible boat and hounding Furies. When Nero determined to kill his mother, he had to be devious, hence the story of the boat engineered to tip her into the sea. Dio writes that the device was inspired by something seen in the theater when a ship opened up, discharged a cargo of animals, and then closed again (61.12.2). Suetonius writes that Agrippina was meant either to drown when the boat broke up or die when her cabin on deck collapsed; he also tells of a failed attempt in which the ceiling panels of her bedroom on dry land were intended to fall on her and crush her as she slept (*Nero* 34.2). The *Octavia* provides a generous serving of emotion if no further detail (*Octavia* 309–18, 601). The sources must have offered a confusion of information, and actual eyewitnesses would have been scarce or, more likely, non-existent. There was disagreement not only about shipboard events but also about how Agrippina got to the banquet that preceded the boat ride and how Nero enticed her on board the rigged ship (*Annals* 14.4.4; *Nero* 34.2; Dio 61.12.3–13.2). Tacitus tries to make a plausible story of it all: a heavy covering falls over the portion of the deck where Agrippina is encamped, but she and her maid escape injury for the moment. The mechanism designed to make the boat disintegrate does not function and the rowers lean to one side and then the other to try to pitch Agrippina and her maid overboard. They finally succeed (*Annals* 14.5). Did Tacitus transfer Suetonius' collapsing ceiling from dry land to shipboard? He fails to make total sense out of the confusion of detail, but his effort is visible.

Agrippina was finally murdered in her house. The act of matricide echoes the tragedy of Orestes and Clytemnestra and perhaps Euripides' *Electra* (Baltussen (2002) 31–9) or Sophocles' *Antigone* (Keitel (2009) 131–2) in particular. Tacitus' focus is on Agrippina's psychological state, evoking the atmosphere as she waits for the end. Nero's agent enters Agrippina's house and her slaves begin to desert. The light is dim and she is alone with a single maid. "Now there was solitude and sudden noises and the signs of a final evil." The maid departs too, and Agrippina is completely alone (*Annals* 14.8.2–5). This evocative treatment recalls his treatment of the murder of Britannicus when he describes the mood at the banquet when the boy was killed (*Annals* 13.16.3–4). Tacitus expands on what Dio and Suetonius will offer. All of our extant texts incorporate Nero's guilty conscience as reified by Agrippina's ghost, who enters with the Furies' torches to the accompaniment of distant trumpets (*Annals* 14.10.3; Dio 61.14.4; *Nero* 34.4). In *Octavia* her ghost comes with hellish torch in bloody hand to curse the marriage of Nero and Poppaea (*Octavia* 593–645). Drama was inherent in the scene. The senatorial historian with his self-imposed imperative to examine the broader issues of history gives full play to the sensational story found in his sources.

A major focus in *Octavia* is another of the Nero tableaux, another of his major crimes, his divorce from and then execution of Octavia, the daughter of Claudius (see Buckley in this volume). The highly emotional tragedy was found with the manuscripts of Seneca's tragedies, but Seneca could not write it since it includes specific reference to Nero's death in AD 68 (*Octavia* 619–31) and Seneca was dead in 65. Furthermore, the tragedy is extremely hostile to Nero and could not have been staged (if staged it ever was) when he was alive. Its date of composition is a continuing controversy, but it had to have been written while Nero's crimes and the tragic fates of Claudius' offspring were still of interest. Perhaps it was as early as the short reign of Galba (Kragelund (1988)) but in all probability before the end of the Flavian dynasty (Ferri (2003) 5–30). It shares in the spirit of the lost Flavian histories, whether derived from them or composed at more or less the same time. The death of Octavia is the final chapter of the story of the extinction of the Claudian house, the theme that Tacitus emphasized with the death of Britannicus. He had *Octavia* in the stew of his sources and tapped it when he described the tragic episode (*Annals* 14.63–4: see Ferri (1998); Williams (1994); Billot (2003). Lucarini (2005) acknowledges the similarities but sees the influence running in the opposite direction).

Octavia's story had ample potential for pathos. *Octavia* ends with her departure to exile and then death on the island of Pandataria. The chorus sees her off (*Octavia* 924–57) and compares her fate with that of other women of her family, Agrippina the Elder (934), Livilla, daughter of Germanicus (942), Messallina (947), and Agrippina the Younger (953), women who, the chorus muses, had all known power in their lives before they were overwhelmed by events. Tacitus draws on this passage when he has "onlookers" (his chorus) watch Octavia depart. He writes, "Some still remembered Agrippina's banishment by Tiberius and that of Julia [i.e. Julia Livilla, daughter of Germanicus, banished for adultery with Seneca] by Claudius, fresher in memory" (*Annals* 14.63.2), recalling two of the four women named in the *Octavia*; Octavia is punished without ever having experienced their power. She is "sister and wife" in the drama (*Octavia* 657 and often) and Tacitus makes her "now a widow and no more than a sister" (*Annals* 14.64.1). Her wedding is her funeral in both works (*Octavia* 23–4; *Annals* 14.63.3). Suetonius and Dio write briefly of her exile and death (*Nero* 35.2–3; Dio 62.13.1) but

add nothing of the drama's emotional coloring as Tacitus does. When Tacitus brought the *Octavia* into his text, he was sewing a purple patch on top of a purple patch and ranging far from sober history.

Tacitus' treatment of the Pisonian conspiracy of AD 65 raises a different issue but is also emblematic of his interests and intentions. This was not another Nero-centered episode but a matter of political interest and so was a topic closer to Tacitus' overarching concern with the conflict between the emperor and the senatorial class. He seized the opportunity to explore it in depth. The Pisonian conspiracy is the *Annals*' longest episode of the extant text, taking up the second half of book 15 (*Annals* 15.48–74) and the whole of the year AD 65. If we had books 17–18 of the *Annals*, we would almost certainly find similar emphasis on another political matter, the uprising of Vindex and negotiations with Galba. The conspiracy took its name from Gaius Calpurnius Piso, whose supporters intended him to replace Nero as a more acceptable *princeps*, an "inoffensive Nero" (Syme (1958) 575). In its course Seneca was forced to suicide (15.60–64), and more prosecutions followed in its wake as Thrasea Paetus and Barea Soranus, embodiments of integrity, became victims in AD 66 (*Annals* 16.21–35). Tacitus names names, a great many names – 29 at 15.71 alone. His only reference to the *acta senatus* comes in connection with this plot (*Annals* 15.74.3); his long list of the names of victims was plausibly unearthed there. Dio covers the episode quickly (62.24–7). Suetonius is even briefer and gives no names (*Nero* 36).

The perpetrators of the conspiracy were a group of senators, equestrians, and officers of the Praetorian Guard, who ultimately proved inept. A. J. Woodman writes that Tacitus imposed a dramatic structure on the episode, that he perceived the participants as pretend conspirators and playacting assassins (Woodman (1993)). Flavius Scaevinus wants the "leading role for himself" (*primas sibi partes*; *Annals* 15.53.2) and then stages a kind of dress rehearsal in front of a freedman who betrays both him and the entire venture. The passive Piso has only "the appearance of virtue" (*species virtutibus similis*; *Annals* 15.48.2). But the playacting leads to genuine tragedy. This reading of the attempted coup suggests that Tacitus added rhetoric to his rendering of the episode but does not diminish the conviction that he saw the conspiracy as the business of history and consequently worthy of his detailed attention. The artistry here recalls that found also in the narratives of the tragic-theatrical deaths of Britannicus, Agrippina, and Octavia. Chance contributes to the impression of lingering persecution and unease when the text breaks off as the story of the conspiracy winds down and Thrasea and Soranus are driven to suicide (*Annals* 16.35).

Despite Tacitus' attempt to embed the Nero that he found in his sources in sober information, some of it from official records, and to illustrate how the state actually functioned amid the emperor's extravagances, it is the Nero-centered parts of the story that draw the reader's attention and remain memorable, the dramatic episodes that have generated the myth of the fiddling emperor. This creates problems for some who have approached the text in search of political history. "[Tacitus] concentrates upon a few individuals, to the detriment of large issues of historical fact," writes Mark Morford ((1990) 1625). The historian Sir Ronald Syme acknowledges the Siren song of Agrippina's death scene but disapproves. He writes, "A grave charge subsists: scenes and characters, especially dramatic, deliberately enhanced for colour and effect, while historical proportion suffers." Tacitus allowed himself to be seduced. Still, Syme admits,

history had need of "life and movement" (Syme (1958) 374–5). The elements that focus on Nero are the most striking parts of the third hexad of the *Annals*.

Suetonius

Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus did not pretend to write history. In his *Nero*, the Flavian histories, on which he was as dependent as were Dio and Tacitus, rarely retain what would have been their narrative shape but dissolve into an intricately organized mash of incidents. About 15 years younger than Tacitus, Suetonius wrote biographies of the first 11 emperors and one precursor, Julius Caesar. The last of his 12 *Caesars* was the Flavian Domitian. Suetonius achieved the highest civilian position to which an equestrian could aspire, secretary to the emperor in charge of petitions, serving perhaps under Trajan and certainly under Hadrian. He evidently published at least the first biography of his series (and perhaps all 12) between AD 119 and 122. The first pages of his first biography, that of Julius Caesar, are lost, but the sixth-century Byzantine scholar John Lydus reported (*De Magistratibus* 2.6) that they included a dedication to Gaius Septicius Clarus, who was Hadrian's Praetorian Prefect from AD 119 until probably 122. This means that Suetonius was probably writing his *Caesars* not long after Tacitus wrote his *Annals*. He did not, however, look to Tacitus for his information, but, like Dio, went back to earlier sources. One senses the scholar's pride in relying on these ostensibly more authoritative reports and not on Tacitus' derivative text.

Suetonius focuses on Nero without apology, deliberately excluding all that does not touch on his subject, his tactic with all of his imperial subjects. Corbulo is never named; the Pisonian conspiracy earns only a few sentences. Biography required the parameter of "birth to death," and Suetonius' biographies are purported to follow a pattern. They begin with a discussion of an emperor's ancestry, unless it was shared with another emperor; then come the emperor's birth and his life before accession; at the end stands his death with attendant omens and perhaps his will or other detail to provide closure. Between are elements of his reign and aspects of his character marshaled by topic or rubric, some concrete (marriages, conspiracies), others abstract (modesty, cruelty), some public (wars, consulships), others personal (dining habits, sexual behavior). But Suetonius adjusted this pattern as his subject required. What he chose to emphasize from the common source material and how he chose to order it reveal his thinking about Nero.

Suetonius opens his life of Nero with a particularly long and detailed inquiry into the emperor's birth ancestors, the renowned Domitii Ahenobarbi (*Nero* 1–5), some of whom were admirable, but others not. "Although Nero discarded the virtues of his forefathers, he nonetheless perpetuated the vices of each of them as if they were inherited and a part of him from birth" (*Nero* 1.2). He finds Nero's adoptive Claudian family of no concern since it is the Domitian blood that he inherits. The theme of illegitimacy encountered in Tacitus and *Octavia* begins here and encircles Suetonius' text, ending with Nero's interment in the Domitian burial precinct (*Nero* 50; Meulder (2002) 364–69). Following ancestry come Nero's birth and incidents of his pre-imperial life (his education, his rivalry with Britannicus, his adoption, his marriage to Octavia). These took place during the reigns of Gaius and Claudius and are placed in proper sequence by Dio and Tacitus. Suetonius draws them into the developed biography as

is appropriate (*Nero* 6–7). With the death of Claudius (*Nero* 8) the rubrics of Nero's reign begin. The first is that of *pietas* (*Nero* 9), duty to family, and other virtues follow gathered into the abstractions of *liberalitas*, *clementia*, and *comitas*, generosity, mercy, and affability (*Nero* 10.1). Here are suggestions of Tacitus' early period before Nero's true self was revealed and of the good *quinquennium*. Within this section of good or neutral actions (consulships, building projects, reasonable laws; *Nero* 9–19.2) are three long chapters (*Nero* 11–13) that describe the games that Nero sponsored for the public. These constitute much the longest of Nero's "good rubrics."

Suetonius considered an emperor's sponsorship of *spectacula* (entertainments) and attitude toward them a marker of character. An emperor was virtuous if he provided for his subjects in this way (Bradley (1981)). Nero established the Juvenalia, private games to celebrate the first shaving of his beard, sponsored theatrical productions called the Ludi Maximi, and founded the Neronia, "quinquennial" games in the "Greek fashion" with contests in music, gymnastics, and equestrian events. There were also gladiatorial combats, beast fights, naval battles, and Pyrrhic dances, and Suetonius includes among Nero's commendable shows the extravagant ceremonial welcome of Tiridates, the newly installed king in Armenia, who came to Rome to do obeisance to Nero and receive his crown (see Fantham, Mratschek in this volume). These productions are presented as a credit to Nero, although they contain some dubious items. The Juvenalia and the Ludi Maximi had upper-class participants (*Nero* 11.1), and the revival of the Neronia in AD 65 gave Nero himself the opportunity to participate (*Nero* 12.3–4). Elaborate displays are described: a house burns on stage (*Nero* 11.2); an actor falls while performing the role of Icarus and spatters the emperor with blood (*Nero* 12.2). These might have been lodged under the rubric of extravagance (*Nero* 30–31) and so might have been the show staged when Tiridates came to Rome. Suetonius was aware of the ambiguity of including this last display here: "Not without thought would I report among the other entertainments he put on the entrance of Tiridates to Rome" (*Nero* 13.1). It would seem that Suetonius found so much material about Nero's theatrics in his sources that he decided to distribute some of it here. Neither Dio nor Tacitus makes any part of Nero's showmanship a virtue (Devillers (2009)).

Suetonius turns his attention from the "good" to the "bad" Nero abruptly: "I have collected here these actions of his, some of them irreproachable, others worthy of praise to some degree, in order to separate them from his abuses and crimes, which I shall relate from this point on" (*Nero* 19.3). But he does not open the "bad" Nero chapters with an abstract noun like *pietas* since he had no abstract noun with which to express the idea of obsessive and inappropriate participation in public entertainments, what he clearly thought the most important feature of Nero's character. The negative reprise of the entertainment theme here forms a link to the positive elements in the biography. Suetonius launches into the emperor's training and performance in two areas, music and racing, and in two settings, in Italy and then in Greece (*Nero* 20–25).

Nero learned his skills from a renowned lyre-player, performed stringent training exercises, sang and played first for his friends and then in public at Naples in AD 64. He organized a claque and appeared at Rome at the second Neronia in 65, singing and acting a range of inappropriate mythological characters (*Nero* 20–21). Chariot-racing was a second obsession, and here too he graduated from the amateur to the professional (*Nero* 22.1–2). Nero undertook a tour of the province of Achaia in AD 67 and 68 so as

to participate in as many musical and acting contests as possible and win as many crowns as he could. He insisted that all admire his performance but maintained the charade that he was just one contestant among many as he conscientiously followed the rules for performers (*Nero* 22.3–24.1). His behavior as a chariot-driver was as outrageous in Greece as it was in Rome (*Nero* 24.2). His return parodied a military triumph (*Nero* 25).

Tacitus, on the other hand, introduces Nero's institution of the Juvenalia and the Neronia at the proper chronological points (*Annals* 14.15; 14.20.1, 21.4) and allows the second to trigger a short history of the theater (*Annals* 20.2–21.3). He briefly deplores Nero's debut at Naples AD 64 and his performance at Rome the next year (*Annals* 15.33–34.1,16.4). The part of the *Annals* treating of his circuit of Greece is missing, but it can nonetheless be said that Tacitus did not find Nero's theatrics of the paramount interest that Suetonius did. The epitome of Dio, on the other hand, is rich with details of Nero's conduct in the theater and the behavior of his audience; large swathes of his text are devoted to these activities (61.19–21; 63.1–6.3, 9–10, 14–15), and there are briefer notices in passing. The common sources clearly contained a mass of material about Nero the showman. When Suetonius met this abundance, he deliberately chose to make theatricality the hallmark of Nero's character – both for better and for worse.

Only after this exploration of Nero as an inappropriate performer does Suetonius list the qualities under which his other sins could be organized, the rubrics of *petulentia*, *libido*, *luxuria*, *avaritia*, and *crudelitas*: insolence, lust, extravagance, greed, and cruelty (*Nero* 26.1). The last of these accommodates the largest number of instances as Suetonius works his way through the notorious murders that are major episodes in Tacitus' history. Beginning with those of Nero's immediate family (Claudius, Britannicus, Agrippina) (*Nero* 33–5), he moves on to Seneca and Burrus and his freedmen. The persecution of outsiders permits brief mention of the Pisonian conspiracy (*Nero* 36–7), and the Great Fire of AD 65 finds a place as "cruelty to the city walls" (*Nero* 38). Suetonius returns to chronology with Nero's last months and days. His death is a satisfying climax to his story (*Nero* 40–50).

The narrative of Nero's death is arguably the best writing in the *Caesars* (see Townend (1967) 93–5; Lounsbury (1987) 63; Sansone (1993) 179). Threats from Gaul and Nero's feckless response, his flight from Rome, his death among his freedmen, and his final words are compelling. The narrative is consistent with the abbreviated account that has survived in Dio (63.27.3–29.2), with the very brief mention in Josephus' *Jewish War* (4.493), with the hint of flogging and "disgraceful flight" in the *Octavia* (619–21), and with night flight into unfamiliar countryside in Tacitus' *Histories* (3.68; Bellandi (2006)). The story had been told and told well, it would seem, in a common source and was another tableau to be highlighted. David Sansone argues that it had been overlaid with details of a visit to the underworld (modeled on Plato's myth of Er in the *Republic*) that account for odd brambles, a sand pit and the tunneling into the house at the end. Sansone suggests further that this was the only account of Nero's death extant and that it was written early since Josephus' *Jewish War* was published under Vespasian. But why did Suetonius respond to his sources with 11 chapters of dramatic storytelling when it was his habit to extract and rearrange?

Suetonius has been seen as responding to Tacitus, "scoring points off" him when he could (Wallace-Hadrill (1983) 10, n. 15). For instance, he appears to challenge Tacitus when he assembles correspondence to illustrate Augustus' regard for Tiberius (*Tiberius*

21.2–7), whereas Tacitus wrote that Augustus had been reluctant to make Tiberius his successor (*Annals* 1.10.7). To prove that Gaius was born at Antium (*Caligula* 8), Suetonius parades evidence that embarrasses Tacitus' unquestioning acceptance that the child was "born in the camp" (*Annals* 1.4.2–5). His autopsy of Nero's poetry notebooks (*Nero* 52) appears to counter Tacitus' doubts about the emperor's authorship (*Annals* 14.16.1). Suetonius would have known Tacitus' earlier work, including his *Histories*, and would have been well aware of the historian's reputation. Whether he was familiar with the whole of the *Annals* is another matter since the relative dates of the *Annals* and the *Caesars* are uncertain, but Tacitus may have been well into writing the Nero story before Suetonius wrote his biography. (Syme (1958: 781–2) thinks that Tacitus' last books came too late for Suetonius to have seen them before he wrote about Nero, but his one-upmanship about Nero's poetry notebooks suggests that he had.) It is also possible that the last books of Tacitus' *Annals*, that would have included Nero's death, were never written. If Tacitus died before he finished, Suetonius could have seen an opening that freed him from competition with his more famous predecessor. He had had that freedom when he wrote the lives of Julius Caesar and Augustus. When Tacitus' Julio-Claudian books came to light in the eleventh century, those dealing with the end of Nero's reign were missing; book 16 as it exists was followed directly by books numbered 17 through 21 that are *Histories* 1–5 (Reynolds (1983) 407–9).

But Suetonius was not finished. In all his imperial biographies, he includes aspects of the emperor's private life, items such as his subject's eating habits, writings, religious beliefs and always a physical description, brief or expanded. In his lives of Julius Caesar through Claudius a description of the private man is separated from the public figure. Some of these are marked (*Julius* 44.4; *Augustus* 61.1); others begin unannounced (*Tiberius* 68.1; *Caligula* 50.1; *Claudius* 30). In these first five lives the physical description of the imperial subject is placed before the emperor's death. With Nero, however, the physical description follows (*Nero* 51), and after that come other personal items: his literary efforts, his desire for popularity (and even for immortality, a rubric peculiar to Nero), and his religious beliefs (*Nero* 52–6). At the very end comes notice of the public reaction to his death, both joy at deliverance from the monster but at the same time continuing veneration and the appearance of a false Nero (*Nero* 57). Nero's appearance and vanity seem an anticlimactic and pedestrian afterthought placed after the vivid narrative of his death. Suetonius could easily have inserted these aspects of the private Nero earlier. But choosing to postpone them, he opened the way for a second climax particular to this life. Nero's desire for immortality is realized after a fashion by his ersatz reincarnation. Suetonius put his own stamp on the Nero story.

Conclusion

History edged into biography when the government of Rome became centered on one man. The very designation *princeps*, "first man," speaks to the reality of a single dominant personality. The presence of Corbulo and Boudicca and the Pisonian conspirators on the fringes notwithstanding, Nero's story was largely a succession of scenes of which he starred. This biographical tendency existed even in the late Republic with figures like Felix Sulla and Pompey the Great. Suetonius could write of "Cinnian times,"

(*Caligula* 60), and the still nominally republican Julius Caesar earned a biography. If the principate was to be the permanent institution that it had evolved into after Augustus had become the only strongman left standing in 31 BC, the emperor had to take centre-stage. Although necessary when the principate was the fiefdom of the Julian and Claudian clans, the emphasis on the individual became more acute when a non-family member (such as the Flavian Vespasian) stepped into the role. There had to be a job for him to take, an emperor for him to succeed.

A more historically realistic interpretation of Nero's reign might have been the depiction of palace intrigue focusing on the contending groups that tried to maintain the upper hand while controlling a young and ultimately detached *princeps* more interested in his own performance as a citharode than he was in the governance or even the politics of Rome (Elsner and Masters (1994) 3–5). But it was the need to focus on the individual and his job that made the tale of Nero's eccentric involvement with show business and the deaths and prosecutions of his reign into the tradition that we have inherited. A biographical impetus, a halfway house of "biostructure," may have been inevitable by the third century when Cassius Dio wrote, but his fascination with Nero's eccentricity and extravagance made his portrait unique in his *Roman History*. Suetonius modified his usual formula for Nero and let the narcissistic showman and would-be immortal drive his presentation. Tacitus, for all his efforts, fought a rearguard action. Despite his generous inclusion of foreign affairs and his diligence in bringing senatorial issues into the Nero books of the *Annals*, the biographical character of the Nero story is central in his work. Pelling says of Julius Caesar, "If you are writing history, you find yourself writing biography instead; if you are writing biography, you find yourself writing history" (Pelling (2006) 255). You could write biography about Nero; history was the problem.

FURTHER READING

Griffin (1984) provides a sound biography of Nero, and Champlin (2003) puts Nero's dramatics into a context that makes them understandable. Elsner and Masters (1994) collect essays that open up a variety of perspectives.

The general work on Cassius Dio remains Millar (1964). For Nero and the Julio-Claudians, see Edmundson (1992) and for Nero in particular, Gowing (1997). Pelling (1997) explains structure.

For Tacitus' life and work, Birley (2000). For Tacitus, the best introduction is R. H. Martin (1981). Syme (1958), if challenged on some points, remains comprehensive and authoritative. Martin, Sage and Morford are helpful for the Nero books specifically, all in W. Haase (1990), *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt* II 33.2.

Wallace-Hadrill (1983) explains Suetonius as scholar-biographer. The commentary by Bradley (1978) on Suetonius' life of Nero is accessible and informative. Sansone (1993) on the death of Nero is recommended. Lounsbury (1987, 1991) thinks highly of Suetonius' artistry, especially of his treatment of Nero.

For *Octavia*, see Ferri (1998, 2003), Kragelund (1988).

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CHAPTER 3

Nero the Imperial Misfit: Philhellenism in a Rich Man's World

Sigrid Mratschek

Breaking with Tradition

> *But he crossed over into Greece, not at all as Flamininus or Mummius or as Agrippa and Augustus, his ancestors, had done, but for the purpose of driving chariots, playing the lyre, making proclamations, and acting in tragedies. Rome, it seems, was not enough for him.*
> (Dio 63.8.2–3, trans. Cary).

The emperor seen as an outsider because he forsook the political arena for theatrical spectacle, military prowess for sporting achievement, and cast doubt on Rome's status as centre of the world? Pointedly, this senatorial critic of Nero's penchant for Greek culture was himself from the Greek east, and had even been recalled from Pannonia on the grounds of military incompetence. Cassius Dio's political role models came to Greece as conquerors: T. Quinctius Flamininus (consul 198 and censor 189 BC), victor in 197 BC in the Second Macedonian War; L. Mummius, who had laid waste the flourishing merchant city of Corinth (146 BC); Augustus and Agrippa, victors in the naval battle off Actium (31 BC). In complete contrast, as Elaine Fantham has brilliantly expounded in this volume, Nero's public behavior – for which Tacitus has no words other than "debauchery and opprobrium" (*flagitia et infamia*, *Annals* 14.15.3) – was perceived as shocking, even though poetry and rhetoric before audiences constituted borderline cases juristically and participation in Greek-style contests (*agōnes*) did not strictly speaking incur opprobrium (*infamia*). (The difference between Nero's public contest (*agōn*) and a theater spectacle is defined by Leppin (1992) 143–4: on the *infamia* attached to theater actors, see the Praetorian Edict recorded in Justinian's *Digest* 3.2.1). The status of emperor was incompatible with the roles of artist or chariot-driver: actors in Rome lost their standing as Roman citizens, and the elites were not normally seen at chariot races except as sponsors or fans. What were the thinking and motives behind Nero's

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seemingly radical innovations in social practices and rituals, which broke with tradition and fundamentally realigned communication between the emperor and the people? Or are the manipulation and destruction of memory that influence our image of Nero even today (Elsner (1994) 112–27) the explanation for his histrionic self-presentation, which significantly enhanced cultural interpenetration of Greeks and Romans and also brought about a breakthrough in the philhellenism of the adoptive emperors?

Greek Culture at the Imperial Court

The Roman ideal of practical activity benefiting the state meant that, in spite of the prominence of the "Scipionic Circle" and the customary education of young senators in Greece, engagement with Greek art and culture was seen as the typical activity of foreigners, freedmen, and slaves, and for Romans the stuff of relaxation (*otium*), to be confined to leisure hours. The same applied to sports and Greek gymnastics (Bergmann in this volume). The adjective φιλέλλην (*philhellēn*), "Greece-loving," does not occur as a title of Hellenistic kings; it occurs neither in official communications to Greek cities from Roman magistrates and emperors, nor in decrees of honor dedicated to emperors (Ferrary (1988) 497–526): its attribution to Nero is unique (see below).

Under Augustus, Virgil had famously reserved the art of government for Romans, leaving the less important intellectual and aesthetic arts, the *artes liberales*, to the others (*alii*), predominantly Greeks (*Aeneid* 6.851–52). Nero belonged to these "others." He sang, painted, tried his hand at sculpture, effortlessly composed poetry for pleasure and played the lyre. But this does not mean that his efforts brought him universal opprobrium. Alexander the Great had played the lyre as well (Suetonius, *Nero* 52.1, 20.1), and mastery of this instrument formed part of upper-class education. In addition, an anonymous panegyric of C. Calpurnius Piso, the Piso who would go on to lead the anti-Nero conspiracy, extolled the young aristocrat's poetic gift (v. 162–65), his singing to lyre accompaniment (v. 166–77) and his sporting feats (v. 185–89). Martial bestowed on Nero the epithet of learned poet (*poeta doctus*), implying scholarly, formally sophisticated poetic art in the style of Callimachus of Alexandria (*Epigrams* 8.70.8). Nero's mother Agrippina, who authored her own memoirs, probably encouraged him to read Aratus' Hellenistic poetry about constellations, in the translation of his grandfather Germanicus, and the eyewitness accounts of his grandfather's visit to Egypt. (On Germanicus' authorship of Aratus' *Phaenomena*, see Sullivan (1985) 79 and for his Egyptian travels, see Tacitus' *Annals* 2.59–61; for Agrippina's *commentarii* 4.53.2.) Germanicus, in Egypt without Emperor Tiberius' permission, had been fêted in Alexandria as benefactor (*euergetēs*) after dispensing corn from the imperial granaries. Transgressing the code of dress and behavior expected of a Roman statesman, he had exchanged the appropriate national garb of boots and toga for sandals and a Greek cloak; and he had sailed up the Nile to Thebes and Elephantine, not out of concern for the province but as a tourist, to see Memphis, the Pyramids, the Colossi of Memnon, and Lake Moeris.

From earliest childhood Nero had individuals around him with personal, official, or intellectual links to Egypt (Nöske 2004). His wet-nurse, Alexandria, was of Greek or Egyptian origin; her son C. Caecina Tuscus, would become prefect of Egypt (*praefectus Aegypti*) under Nero in AD 62–4. In addition, the Stoic philosopher and Egyptian priest

Chaeremon, previously curator of the Musaeum in Alexandria, and author of several books on Egypt, was appointed in 49, together with Alexander of Aegae, to tutor Nero (*Fragments of the Greek Historians* 618). In about AD 50, Tiberius Claudius Balbillus, a native of Alexandria, supporter of Agrippina, and head of the eastern section of the Foreign Office in Rome (*ad legationes et responsa Graeca*), was promoted to head of the Musaeum and high priest (*archiereus*) of the imperial cult in Alexandria: five years later he was made prefect of Egypt. In return, he saw to it when reorganizing the Alexandrian tribes (*phylai*) that the names of the 15 new *phylai* acknowledged Nero, and also had coinage minted showing Nero with a radiate crown (Bergmann (1998) 228). Nero's tutor Seneca also had strong contacts with the province of Egypt through his aunt Helvia, wife of the prefect of Egypt C. Galerius, and had authored a book entitled "On the Geography and Holy Places of Egypt" (*De situ et sacris Aegyptiorum*): he visited Galerius towards the end of the latter's term of office and toured the Nile region (*ad Helviam* 19.1).

Nero's interest in the Hellenistic east and in Egyptian culture contrasted with the Rome-centered conception of the empire under Augustus and Tiberius. Hölscher (2002: 254) has shown that this change is reflected in Nero's iconography. Imperial portraits were intended to convey the self-image of the ruler and ensure his omnipresence, and Nero's portraits as heir-apparent conformed to this dynastic standard. But Nero's imperial portraits present him as ruling over the abundance of life, with a fashionable halo of curly locks like a nimbus surrounding the brow, after the manner of Hellenistic kings (Bergmann in this volume; Hölscher (2002) fig. 134). And in Egypt, Nero was stylized in the "Egyptian" mode after taking office: inscriptions, papyri, and coin legends transmitted new imperial propaganda material by honoring Nero as snake with the double crown of the Pharaohs, the new "presiding spirit" (*agathos daimōn*) of the world (e.g. *Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae*, *OGIS* 666, near the Sphinx of Giza; Nöske (2004) 233–4).

Nero paved the way, far in advance, for the second great transformation of the Roman world during the Principate, which culminated in the Second Sophistic and the humanitarian *imperium* of the second century (Bowersock (1969) 15–16, 43–44): it was to become "Greco-Roman" in outlook, culture, and learning. It is indicative that Philostratus (*Lives of the Sophists* 511–12) attributed the renaissance of Sophistic thinking to Nicetes of Smyrna under Nero, and that his father, Philostratus the Elder, wrote a dialogue *Nero* under the Antonines (Suda entry Philostratus the Elder, no. 422 Adler). The Second Sophistic was preceded by a rapprochement between politics and literature, during which, Suetonius tells us, Nero's first year of rule saw numerous teachers of rhetoric (*professors*, *doctores*) from the lowest social strata rise to senatorial rank and the highest offices (*On Rhetoricians* 1: cf. Mratschek (1993) 14–40). Nero's tutor Seneca, son of a rhetoric teacher from Corduba, was the first of these new men who owed their wealth and position at the imperial court to their eloquence.

Caesar Omnia Habet: It's a Rich Man's World

It was tempting for Suetonius (*Nero* 1; 4; 6.3) to suggest that Nero had inherited the bulk of his "faults" from his father's side of the family, the Domitii Ahenobarbi, saying nothing about his maternal, Augustan lineage. His love of horseracing came

from his paternal grandfather and father. He grew up in the household of his aunt, Domitia Lepida, where his tutors (*paedagogoi*) were a dancer and a barber; as guest of his other aunt Domitia he became acquainted with the famous actor, Paris (Tacitus, *Annals* 13.19.3). Nero lived in the glitter of a rich man's world – irrespective of the fact that after his father's death in AD 40 Suetonius downgrades him to "almost destitute and needy," because Caligula had swindled him out of his inheritance (*Nero* 6.3). The truth was that Domitia Lepida indulged Nero with lavish pocket-money (Tacitus, *Annals* 12.64). His aesthetic culture derived not from Greece itself, but from the Greek-influenced milieu round the Bay of Naples, where the "top ten thousand" had their villas (Wallace-Hadrill (1983) 182–3). Lepida and her sister Domitia owned palatial homes in fashionable Baiae and near Ravenna and Puteoli, large estates in Calabria, and gardens washed by the Tiber (Tacitus, *Annals* 12.65.1 and Dio 61.17.1–2 report on the landholdings of Nero's aunts: see Mratschek (1993) 51–2). In the late 30s, litigation between Nero's father and his sister Domitia had been quashed as vexatious "on grounds of the superabundant wealth of both parties" (Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 6.1.50). At Actium, the Domitii Ahenobarbi had switched allegiance to Octavian's side in good time; and Nero's mother, after returning from exile in AD 41, made two profitable marriages, first to the millionaire Passienus Crispus, then to the Emperor Claudius. Under Claudius, Nero not only regained his paternal legacy, but benefited to the tune of 200 million sesterces through his slave-trading stepfather (cf. Suetonius' *Life of Passienus Crispus*, and the epigraphic evidence from *Die Inschriften von Ephesos* (*IvEph*) 3025).

Once emperor, Nero was immeasurably wealthy: he not only became Africa's biggest landowner, having "inherited" half of the province, but could afford, thanks to his mother's huge bequest, to put 60 million sesterces of his private income at the state's disposal annually during the Armenia crisis (Tacitus, *Annals* 15.18.3). During Tiridates' state visit to Rome, Nero spent 800,000 sesterces daily and also handed the newly crowned Armenian king 100 million more as a parting present; the latter reciprocated with twice that amount (Suetonius, *Nero* 30.2; Dio 63.2.1, 63.6.5; Mratschek (1993) 52–4). No wonder Seneca could argue that everything belonged to Caesar: the implied equivalence between the imperial treasury (*fiscus*) and patrimony (*patrimonium*) is perfectly clear. "Caesar 'has' everything: his *fiscus* only his own private property; and all things are subject to his control (*imperium*), in the *patrimonium* (only) his personal property" (*On Benefits* 7.6.3, see Millar (2001) 198 and Levick (1986) 201). Tacitus indeed considered it immaterial whether funds flowed into the state coffers, the *aerarium*, or the emperor's pocket, the *fiscus* (*Annals* 6.2.1). (On the imperial finances more generally, see Lavan in this volume.)

Like the Gleaming Sun

The desire to outdo his predecessors influenced Nero's foreign policy and costly construction program (see D. Braund in this volume). Models can be found in his family history both for his eastern policy and for the coronation of the Armenian prince Tiridates. In AD 18, on his mission to the east, Germanicus had solved the disputed succession in Armenia by installing Zeno-Artaxias as ruler (Tacitus, *Annals* 2.56.2, 64.1). Like him, Nero was accorded a semi-triumph, an *ovatio*, following his legate Corbulo's

settlement with the Parthians in AD 55. Or should Tiridates' Roman coronation even be read as a bid by Nero for an Armenian triumph in compensation for that denied long ago by the Senate to his ancestor M. Antonius? Nero's great-grandfather Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus had not only participated in the Parthian War as a member of Mark Antony's general staff, but had also been one of the consuls of 32 BC who had petitioned for a triumph (Dio 49.41.4–5). What is certain is that Nero styled the conquest of Artaxata and expulsion of Tiridates in AD 58 as a victory over the Parthians (Tacitus, *Annals* 13.41).

The theme of Nero as victor is visualized clearly on the marble reliefs in the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias, in a typical Hellenistic figuration of Roman imperial authority: the emperor, flanked by a statue of a winged Nike with a trophy (*tropaeum*) is presented in heroic nudity, equipped only with helmet, war-cloak and sword, in the act of taking the province of a personified Armenia prisoner (Reynolds (1981) 325; Smith (1987) 132–3, plate 14, no. 7). Another relief shows him as a general, in armor and military cloak (*paludamentum*), with his helmet lying at his feet, standing before a goddess, Fortuna or Pax, who has the face and the diadem of his mother Agrippina, receiving a laurel crown from her (Smith (1987) 127–32, plate 24, no. 11; Erim (1989) 64, fig. 91). The goddess's gesture as she crowns him victor signifies amity (*concordia*) and the "horn of plenty" (*cornucopia*) in her left hand promises wealth and abundance. The work may well have been officially commissioned, as a comparable scene is depicted on the cameo of the Shrine of the Three Magi in Cologne Cathedral (Eck (1993) 63, with reference to Megow (1987) 213–14, plate 35.1.2: on the front cover of this volume). A further, now lost, relief showed Nero with the sun god Helios (Reynolds 324, no. 9, plate 12d). These sculptures show us divine emperors as the Greek east saw them, evoking a contented Greek world under Roman rule.

Depicting oneself as a "New Helios" was not Nero's invention. Under the influence of Stoic and Greek thinking, Mark Antony, Julius Caesar, and Augustus had all become associated with the solar symbolism that represented the sun god as observer of the human world and guardian of the cosmic order. This solar symbolism served to legitimize the universalist aspirations of Hellenistic world rule and had its origins in ruler cult. Before Nero, both Caligula and Alexander, conqueror of the east, had already played the role of "New Helios": and Octavian too had taken the role of Phoebus Apollo at a Twelve Gods Festival (*Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum* (*SIG*^{3}) 798; Philo, *Embassy to Gaius* 13.95; Suetonius, *Augustus* 70.1; Weinstock (1971) 381–4). In addition the sun cult was established in Rome: the calendar under Augustus listed a regular sacrifice to Sol on August 9, whose temple occupied a prominent site opposite the Ara Pacis, near the historic Altar of Providence, and whose priesthood bore the title of priests of the sun (Beard et al. (2000) 259).

Nero was venerated as "New Helios" only in the Greek east, in Boeotia (*SIG*^{3} 814, l.34) and Pisidia (*Inscriptiones Graecae ad res Romanas pertinentes* (*IGR*) 3.345), and in a Greek epigram (*Anthologia Palatina* 9.178). It seems to have been Seneca, Nero's tutor, who transferred the sun god identification to his pupil and inserted it into the official schedule of events celebrating his accession to the throne in 54 (though see below on the date of this passage).

In the *Apocolocyntosis*, Phoebus Apollo likens the new emperor's arrival (*adventus*) to his own epiphany as the dawning sun; all subsequent visual programs in imperial

panegyrics are anticipated here in the visualization of Nero as Sol's alter ego (4.25–33, trans. Eden):

qualis discutiens fugientia Lucifer astra
aut qualis surgit redeuntibus Hesperus astris,
qualis, cum primum tenebris Aurora solutis
induxit rubicunda diem, Sol aspicit orbem
lucidus et primos a carcere concitat axes:
talis Caesar adest, talem iam Roma Neronem
aspiciet. flagrat nitidus fulgore remisso
vultus et adfuso cervix formosa capillo.

> Like the Morning Star, as he rises scattering the stars in flight, or like the Evening Star, as he rises when the stars return (at dusk), like the gleaming Sun, as soon as rosy Dawn has dispelled the shadows and led in the day, as he gazes on the world and begins to whip up his chariot from the starting-barrier: such a Caesar is at hand, such a Nero shall Rome now gaze upon. His radiant face blazes with gentle brilliance and his shapely neck with flowing hair.

Inspiration for this came from Nero's physical appearance and musical talent: the imperial bard with his blue-grey eyes and strikingly blond rows of ringlets sweeping down in the Greek manner, as Suetonius characterizes him (*Nero* 51.1–2), resembled "gold-gleaming Phoebus" (v. 22–3; 30–31). The god prophesied for Nero the things Nero most craved, immortality and imperishable glory (v. 21; cf. *Nero* 55). Memories of the intellectual culture of the past in Virgil's *Aeneid* establish parallels between Augustus and Nero. Like Anchises in the underworld of *Aeneid* 6, Phoebus Apollo here prophesies "happy ages" (*felicia . . . saecula*, v. 23–4) for the future ruler. But there is irony in the fact that it was evidently Nero himself, with a typical artist's narcissism, who launched the solar metaphor into circulation, not on his accession, but in AD 59, after the murder of Agrippina. From that point on, there are rapidly multiplying evocations of a Golden Age in which Nero gave free rein to his creativity as charioteer and singer, and was hailed by Lucan as a "successful Phaëthon" (Lucan, *Civil War* 1.47–52; Champlin (2003) suggests that the song of Apollo in the *Apocolocyntosis* was a late addition to the sketch, interpolated in the 60s; for a contrasting view, see Nauta (2010)).

Greek Theatrical Culture in Rome

Nero initiated new-style festivals, largely Greek in character, that afforded him the opportunity for artistic performances aimed – unacceptably, by traditional standards – at grandiose self-presentation and constant direct contact with the public. This new self-promotional activity and Nero's claims to power were reflected in a far-reaching realignment of the communicative relations between emperor and people. In AD 59, at the Juvenalia festival (convened to commemorate the shaving of the emperor's first beard), Nero appeared for the first time as a citharode in a semi-public arena. Participants in the stage action had before concealed their identity behind masks, but this anonymity was broken when Nero ordered them to remove their masks and show themselves to the plebs (Dio 61.19.3). An innovation from Greek theatrical culture came only

a year later at the Neronia, in the musical competitions that he introduced alongside gymnastic and horseracing contests "on the Greek model" (Suetonius, *Nero* 12.3; *Roman Imperial Coinage* (*RIC*) I 171). These disciplines had not been included in the games dedicated to Apollo Actiacus under Augustus, and subsequently gave Nero his chance to appear publicly in person. During contests (*agōnes*), the event manager, *agōnothetēs*, would appear dressed in the Greek manner. Conservative political circles were offended by Rome's transformation into a Greek city for the duration of the festival. It was considered fashionable to adapt one's outer clothing at these games in recognition of the special atmosphere, and the majority of the urban population of Rome, according to Tacitus (*Annals* 14.21.4), went about wearing Greek garb. In an effort to induce the reluctant Roman aristocracy to join in, Nero had a gymnasium built near his baths and, following Greek custom, donated the unguents used there (Dio 61.21.1; Tacitus, *Annals* 14.47; see Beste and von Hesberg in this volume). He selected the "Greek city" of Naples for the dress rehearsal of his public debut; and it was from the Alexandrians that he drew the most applause (Suetonius, *Nero* 20.3). Another year passed before he let the Roman public see him on the stage, during the second *Neroneus agōn*, as a citharode, although he modestly declared that he had actually come forward as an orator and had only sung because carried away emotionally by his audience (Tacitus, *Annals* 16.4). It seems that it was not the desire to be accepted by the plebs, but his idiosyncratic conception of himself as a tragic artist with a Greek repertoire that motivated Nero's support for Greek-style competitions, for he also excluded pantomime, a favorite with the general public (Tacitus, *Annals* 14.21.4: on Nero's later career as "tragic" artist, see Bartsch (1994) 36–62).

Lord of the Golden Age

Nero assumed the role of lord of a new Golden Age in the summer of AD 64 when he began the task of transforming the burnt-out city centre into his vision of a new Rome, with a luxurious residence surrounded by 50 hectares of parkland (see Beste and von Hesberg in this volume). The principal building stood on the Oppian hill slope, its 365-meter-long show façade looking down on a lake and park to the south. The few surviving traces of this imperial palace, the "Golden House," testify to its unprecedentedly expensive and innovative architecture, construction techniques, and furnishings: Suetonius was prompted to comment, "Nowhere was Nero as extravagant as when building" (*Nero* 31.1–2). In the interior, "everything was plated in gold and colorfully decorated with precious stones and mother-of-pearl." The main banqueting-room, found during fresh excavations in 2009, "was circular, and (its ceiling) revolved day and night like the universe itself." The Golden House was not a dwelling, but an extensive Roman *villa suburbana* resembling the country houses in the Bay of Naples: it overlooked fields and ponds, "and an air of solitude was given by wooded ground alternating with clear tracts and open landscapes" (Tacitus, *Annals* 15.42.1).

The Domus Aurea was a retreat designed for the cultivated leisure (*otium*) of high society – which by Roman tradition meant literary pursuits – and had its own gymnasium: the Roman villa since the Republic had drawn on the Hellenistic world for architectural ideas, artificial lakes, and parkland with animals, for its art collections, its libraries, its shaded garden pleasances for philosophical discussion. (On Hellenistic and oriental

models for the Golden House, see Elsner (1994) and Bergmann (1994) 24.) Nero and his architects, using their artistic imagination (*per artem*), simply transplanted this rural ambience (*natura*) into the capital city. Their "error" was that in so doing they converted Rome's political nerve-centre into a particularly exclusive holiday complex. When Nero declared, "Now, I can at last begin to live like a human being" (Suetonius, *Nero* 31.2), thereby redefining the seat of government as a place of omnipresent *otium*, he raised hackles among his own kind.

Far more disturbing to Nero's peers than the emperor's luxurious home and adoption of the Greek lifestyle was the unparalleled act of self-aggrandizement represented by the larger-than-life bronze statue that the Greek sculptor Zenodorus created for the vestibule of the Domus Aurea: it portrayed the emperor, with radiate crown, in the guise of the sun god, his hand on a helmsman's tiller and globe (reconstruction by Bergmann (1994), fig. 10). Pliny the Elder saw it under construction in the sculptor's workshop (*Natural History* 34.45). Although it has not been established whether this colossus was in fact erected on the Via Sacra during Nero's lifetime, the thinking behind it is undisputed. Whereas the Domus Aurea evoked the magical gold-gleaming palace of the sun god in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (2.1–2), here the Nero of Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* (4.28, 30–31), at once world ruler and salvation-bringer, looked down on Rome from above like Sol on his world. At 119.5 feet (over 35 meters) high, the nude statue with the features of the final Nero portrait type is the largest in antiquity, surpassing even the famous Colossus of Rhodes, which may have been its model; the New York Statue of Liberty, without plinth, measures 46.5 m. Nero's colossus not only dominated the ensemble of palace buildings between the Palatine and Oppian hills, but gleamed brightly in the sun with its coating of gold, conspicuous from all over the city as the incarnated god of the Golden Age (Champlin (2003) 131–2). The observer would recognize at once that the artificial landscape at its feet, as depicted by Suetonius (*Nero* 31), was a microcosm of the world in a new paradisiacal existence: a lake surrounded by miniature cities, farms and wild countryside, humans and animals, representing the *Imperium Romanum*, with the Mediterranean Sea at its heart. And the emperor was following Greek tradition when in AD 64 he invited the entire city to come there for festivities and feasting (Tacitus, *Annals* 15.3.1; Schmitt Pantel (1997)).

There are further creative discourses between poetic panegyrics to rulers and their visual realizations, prompted by the theatricality of ancient culture. Suetonius (*Nero* 13.1) lists the coronation ceremony for Tiridates, the Armenian prince, among the category of "spectacles" (*spectacula*). These coronation rites, following Tiridates' triumphal entry into Rome in the summer of AD 66, sealed the compromise under which Armenia became a Roman client kingdom governed by a Parthian dynasty. The fruit of diplomatic communication between Rome and Parthia, the crowning of Tiridates represented a face-saving solution for both major powers. This coronation marked the international recognition of a legitimate monarch when Nero enacted the formal coronation by replacing Tiridates' tiara, symbol of Armenian rule, with the diadem of an independent Hellenistic ruler (Suetonius, *Nero* 13.2). With the illumination of the city, rejoicing crowds, supplications, games, Nero's salutation as *imperator* and the dedication on the Capitol of a laurel wreath for Jupiter, the coronation successfully created the atmosphere of a triumph even though none had actually been sanctioned by the Senate. The closing of the doors of the temple of Janus brought back memories of Augustus, and conveyed

the message that the emperor's victory in the eastern war signalled the end of all other wars too (e.g. *Roman Imperial Coins* (*RIC*^{2}) Nero, no. 50–51; Heil (1997) 133–4; D. Braund in this volume).

This "Golden Day" (*dies aureus*) illustrates the depth of Nero's passion for theatrical effects, in particular glamorous lighting. Foggy weather on the day scheduled for the coronation meant swift postponement of the ceremony (*Nero* 13.1). The sun played a crucial role in both stagings, in the Forum and in the Theater of Pompey. Did Nero here stage his own apotheosis, using solar symbolism in the performance of the coronation ritual? Spotlit by the rising sun, Nero appeared at dawn like the vision (*theōria*) of the sun god, representing the culmination of a ritualized process (Elsner (2007) 23–4). Even the normally sober Cassius Dio (63.4.2) was so captivated by the lighting effects that to describe their impact he momentarily forsook the historian's perspective for that of an on-the-spot spectator: Nero, clad in the *triumphator*'s purple, appeared in the Forum as the first rays of the rising sun hit the white-clad multitude and reflected off the soldiers' metallic armour, the shimmering weapons and standards. Falling full on the emperor's face, the rays highlighted his fair hair and the purple robe in a memorable image, as Tiridates paid obeisance to him saying: "I have come to you, my god, worshipping you as I do Mithras" (i.e. my sun; Dio 63.5.2). Champlin ((2003) 92, 226–9) and Bergmann ((1994) 17) have shown fascinatingly, although in different ways, that Nero's metaphorical use of light in this theatrical staging did not aim at the unified political or religious concept of a cosmic god-ruler (L'Orange (1942)), but rather at a multi-layered complex of Parthian, Hellenistic, and Roman ideas. The two actors – Nero as "initiant" into the religion of Mithras, and Tiridates as priest of the Persian god of light – here enacted a fusion of Roman triumph and Parthian ceremony which culminated in a resplendent theatrical presentation of the living ruler as the new sun god, and of the eastern magus worshipping the sun. According to Pliny, a tenacious rumour maintained that Nero had been initiated by Tiridates into the religion of Zoroaster and Mithras (*Natural History* 30.16–17).

The virtual theater performance in the Forum continued in the real theater: once again the masses succumbed to the illusion of seeing Nero in the sun's place when they raised their gaze skywards. Exactly as in Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis*, an emblem of Nero embroidered in gold on the purple sun canopy above the Theater of Pompey showed him driving the sun's chariot up the sky amidst a host of twinkling stars and looking down on the gleaming gold of the theater's interior (Dio 63.6.2). The gilding of the theater, the Domus Aurea, the "Golden Day," and the fire-gilded Nero portrait (Born and Stemmer (1996) on the "golden Nero") all symbolize the radiance of the sun god, though without thereby implying an oriental solar monarchy. Nero used the interaction of poetry and visual spectacle to suggest that his old tutor's prophecy and the public's expectations as he took up the rule had been fulfilled: Phoebus Apollo, the poetry-making sun god, was the herald (*vates*) of Nero's reign.

Festival Victor and Benefactor of all Greeks

Since the Republic the Domitii Ahenobarbi, as patrons of Greek cities, had built up networks in the Aegean in places such as Samos, Miletus, Chios, Ephesus, and during

the early Principate, also in Buthrotum in Epirus (Carlsen (2006) 189, 206–13). Nero as emperor continued this family tradition, but in his own way, so that it served his self-fulfillment as an artist. In late summer of AD 66 he left Rome and travelled to Greece, home of musical, dramatic, and equestrian contests, to demonstrate there his skills as charioteer and bard before what could be regarded a connoisseur audience. It was his express will to return home as *periodonikēs*, a circuit victor in all the great festivals. The Grand Tour of the early empire comprised six festivals – the four Panhellenic Games at Olympia (Olympics), Delphi (Pythia), Argos (Nemeia), and Corinth (Isthmia), along with the Actia at Nicopolis and Heraia at Argos (Kennell 1988). For Nero's benefit, all six were exceptionally scheduled for a single year, partly to suit the imperial itinerary, and partly to make it possible to surpass the existing criterion for a *periodonikēs*, which stipulated victory at "only" four of the six festivals in the cycle (Gallivan (1973) 231–2; Kennell (1988) 250).

On his tour, the artist Nero flouted social conventions by recruiting most of his huge retinue from varied social rankings, including a 5000-strong claque made up of musicians and freedmen and called *Augustani* (Dio 63.8.4; Bradley (1979); Meier (2008) 566–7 provides an excellent synopsis of the route taken by Nero and his entourage). Nothing illuminates the shift of political power between emperor and Senate aristocracy more tellingly than the Neronian court's geographic mobility, in that power now resided not with the Senate in Rome but with Nero's travelling entourage in the provinces, mostly composed of persons of low social status. This forfeited the emperor's acceptance by the upper social strata. Nero's obsessive enthusiasm for all things Greek only increased alienation: this became evident, for instance, when he favored the city emissaries over his own compatriots, saying that "only the Greeks really knew how to listen and . . . were worthy of his art" (Suetonius, *Nero* 22.3).

Philhellenes like Cicero had made it a maxim that as the Greeks were the cradle of culture and civilization they merited especially favorable treatment (see, e.g., *Letters to his Brother Quintus* 1.1). It is characteristic of Nero's style of government that he took the opportunity to confer autonomy and freedom from taxation on the province of Achaea by formal proclamation issued as the highlight of his tour at the Isthmus of Corinth. The speech that Nero delivered on 28 November 67 proclaiming freedom for Greece, which is the only imperial speech accessible to us in full and in its official form, may have been personally drafted by the emperor, for Seneca, Nero's speechwriter, had died two years earlier. It has been judged by Griffin (2001) 41) to be "perfectly competent, even elegant at times, if idiosyncratic and somewhat wanting in tact." Along with this speech, preserved in inscription, the decree of Acraephia in Boeotia, honoring Nero as "philhellene" (φιλέλλην) – the only decree known to date that honors a Roman ruler in this way – has come down to us. Unlike Augustus and Tiberius, and to the indignation of leading Romans, Nero addressed Greek audiences in Greek and – like the Hellenistic kings – styled himself as their country's benefactor.

A close look at Nero's speech is crucial for unpicking his attitudes to philhellenism:

> An unexpected gift (*dōrea*), Hellenes, – though indeed there is nothing which cannot be hoped for from my munificence (*megalophrosynē*) – I grant to you, so great that you would not have dared to ask for it. All you Hellenes who inhabit Achaea and what has up to now been called the Peloponnese, receive freedom (*eleutheria*) and exemption from tribute

> (*aneisphoria*), which you did not all enjoy even in the period of your good fortune; for you were subject either to others or to each other. Would that I had been able to provide this gift when Greece was flourishing, so that more people might have enjoyed my favour (*charis*); for that I blame the passage of time for having reduced in advance the magnitude of my favour. And now I do you a service not through pity but through goodwill (*eunoia*), and I give thanks to your gods, of whose care for me I have had proof on land and sea, for enabling me to confer so great a benefit. For other rulers have freed cities, [but only Nero] a province. (SIG^3 814, Smallwood (1967) no. 64 = Sherk (2001) no. 71, trans. Millar (2001) 430)

Nero here clearly modeled himself on T. Quinctius Flamininus, the conqueror of the Macedonians, who had done exactly the same thing 262 years before, in precisely the same place. Nero's proclamation of freedom for Greece has crucial significance in understanding his philhellenism. Yet opinions differ on the style and impact of Nero's address. Cizek discerns elements of Hellenistic ruler concepts ((1972) 87–8); for Bergmann the speech is an affront to contemporary Greeks and a measure of Nero's "megalomania" ((2002) 273, 281–3). Alcock considers Nero to be propagating here "a new conception of Greece . . . not as a land of the past, but as part of the imperial present" ((1994) 105).

In reality, the central concern of Nero's philhellenism was his own position as ruler and that of his court as a political and cultural focus. Unlike the philhellene Hadrian, Nero forgot to visit Athens, cradle of Greek culture, and never went to Sparta. Though Alcock ((1994) 105) attributes this omission to Nero's deliberate preference for the new "Roman" province of Achaea and of Corinth, its capital, we might rather agree with Champlin ((2003) 54) that in fact Nero's "vaunted 'philhellenism' was sharply limited." Nero did not feel the urge to visit and admire the monuments and historical scenes of classical Greek culture, but instead desired to become the subject of admiration himself.

The key to this interpretation lies in the speech's style and in the vocabulary of imperial magnanimity (*megalophrosynē*), which ranked among the virtues of rulers. Nero's address conformed to the conventions and established code of Hellenistic rulers, showing Strabo (9.2.2 C) to have been right in his thesis that Greek educational background (*paideia*) was a prerequisite for the successful exercise of hegemony over the Greeks. Monarchical rule was in Greek eyes unworthy in principle of a free man, and acceptable only if the Hellenistic ruler reacted sensitively and proved in practice to be a benefactor (*euergetēs*) and protector (*prostatēs*) by providing endowments or reducing taxes; the ultimate mark of favor was to declare a town free, a tradition that had been upheld in the past by Sulla, Caesar, and Augustus (Bringmann (1993); Millar (2001) 430). Like them, Nero presented himself to the Greek cities as a benefactor, and brought them favor, seeking to outdo his predecessors by granting tax remission and freedom, not to a single city but to an *entire province*. A further exceptional gesture was that he granted the privilege (*dōrea*) spontaneously, not on petition. Hoping to perpetuate the memory of this exceptional largesse, Nero even renamed the Peloponnese after himself as "Nero's island," *Nerōnos nēsos.*

Euergetism is an anthropological concept denoting exchange of gifts on a basis of reciprocity in both social and political terms. The inscription accordingly is in two parts: the official version of Nero's edict and proclamation of freedom (quoted above); and the decree of Acraephia honoring the emperor. Nero used the climate of expectancy associated with euergetism as a legitimation strategy for dealing with the provincial

dignitaries, because exceptional benefits bestowed on cities, such as the freeing of a polis, might lead to divine honors for the ruler (Habicht (1970) 160–79; Chaniotis (2006)). Nero here again would have been modeling himself on Flamininus, who at the Isthmian Games of 196 BC had proclaimed the freedom of the Hellenes, thereby earning himself posthumous divinization. This precedent was copied so assiduously that the Greeks even found themselves obliged to repeat the Isthmian Games in the winter of 67 (Polybius 18.46; Pfeilschifter (2005) 278–324). In relation to the empire as a whole, the *princeps* now appeared as "lord of the entire world" (l.31) and "new Helios shining upon the Greeks" (l.33). The decisive point, however, is that the high priest, Epaminondas, expressed communal gratitude for this exceptional bounty by petitioning that Nero – uniquely, on present knowledge, in decrees of honor and official documents – should be honored as "the one and only, the *greatest philhellene emperor* in living memory" (l.40–41: εἷς καὶ μόνος τῶν ἀπ᾽ αἰῶνος αὐτοκράτωρ μέγιστος φιλέλλην) and "benefactor of Greece" (l.34–5: προ<η>ρημένος εὐεργετεῖν τὴν Ἑλ<λ>άδα). Nero was accorded an altar and statues in his role as Zeus Eleutherios, inscribed: "To Zeus, the Deliverer Nero, forever." Statues of Nero and his wife, the "goddess" Statilia Messalina (l.50–53), were to be erected in the temple of the indigenous Apollo Ptoos. Greek intellectuals such as Plutarch of Chaeronea (*Moralia* 32.567F–568A; Swain (1996) 149) – who may have encountered Nero during his Greek travels – came to hold the view that Nero's crimes would be compensated for by his impressive act of philhellenic magnanimity.

In view of the Roman ruling class's opposition, it is possible also that Nero's nostalgic proclamation of Greek freedom was a move towards acquiring a new power base, an alternative body of support in the east to uphold imperial authority. In this he was at least partly successful. Although the Greek elites may well have been angered by Nero's arbitrary interference in their traditional festivals and by the lavish rewards and Roman citizenships granted to the competitions' judges, on balance what counted far more was his popularity as a citharode and friend of the Parthians in the east, even after his death. This view is supported by the appearance of no fewer than three "fake" Nerones, of whom one – Terentius Maximus – was known by a young Suetonius in the AD 80s (*Nero* 57.2; cf. Tacitus, *Histories* 2.8–9). The legend of Nero's return lasted for hundreds of years after the emperor's death: Augustine of Hippo (*City of God* 20.19, p. 450, l.18–25 Dombart-Kalb) wrote of the legend as a popular belief in AD 426. Romans however, for their part, were bound to regard Greece's new legal parity with Italy as an affront provoking outright opposition.

The Last Act: Triumph and On-Stage Death

In his last years, Nero suffered from a bad press. Examples of his "un-Roman" predilection for Greek culture were becoming abundant, a development trumpeted in self-fulfilling hostile polemic as "evidence" of diminishing acceptance of his rule. The sun's radiant light, interpreted as a bad omen at the time of Nero's birth (Suetonius, *Nero* 6.1), nevertheless regularly appeared in the emperor's radiate crown on his coinage (e.g., later on the "antoninianus" coin: see the cover art, with description, of the *Journal of Late Antiquity* 4 (2011), edited by Ralph W. Mathisen). In AD 143 Aelius Aristides

(*Roman Oration* 103) saw the sun as a metaphor for Roman law and order, personified in the emperor – perhaps Antoninus Pius, who wore a radiate nimbus as a sign of the dawning of a new age (Bergmann (1998) 243–4) – who shone "like a brilliant light" upon private and public affairs. But Nero's radiate crowns and his unpopular idea, expressed before his death (Dio 63.27.2), of retiring to Alexandria were embarrassingly reminiscent of his ancestor Mark Antony, who reputedly wanted his capital moved there, and who emphasized the cosmic significance of his domination by naming his children Alexander Helios and Cleopatra Selene. Like Mark Antony, Nero was *philalexandros*: he ordered that a bronze statue of Alexander by Lysippus should be gilded (Pliny, *Natural History* 37.63). But the designation of the emperor's new legion as "phalanx of Alexander" (Suetonius, *Nero* 19.2) invited ironic reflection on the Macedonian's martial charisma, as well as on the questionable deaths of his generals by execution. The lavish funeral accorded in AD 65 to Poppaea Sabina – in whose honor Nero reportedly had a year's supply of incense burnt (Pliny, *Natural History* 12.83) – caused offence, because Nero did not have the empress's body cremated, following ancient Roman custom, but instead had it embalmed and mummified "in the manner of foreign [i.e. Hellenistic] kings" (Tacitus, *Annals* 16.6.2). Even the emperor's grand Greek art theft, securing him some 500 bronzes from Delphi for his Golden House, indicates a near-obsessive appropriation of things Greek (Pausanias 10.7.1; 10.19.2; cf. Pliny, *Natural History* 34.84, with Swain (1996) 344–5 and Strocka (2002)).

The canal through the Isthmus of Corinth, for which Nero made the first spade-cut (Suetonius, *Nero* 19.2), was a useful project, intended to spare seamen the hazardous circumnavigation of the Peloponnese and to expedite transmission of materials and information between east and west. Traces of Nero's endeavors were found as late as the nineteenth century, when the modern canal was cut (Alcock (1993) 141–2, fig. 53). Suetonius (*Nero* 31.7) criticizes the vast expenditure (*impendiorum furor*) that Nero authorized for monumental building projects or for presentation of his art, finally bankrupting the state; to resuscitate it, his successor needed 4,000 million sesterces (following Vacher's edition of Suetonius *Vespasian* 16.3, which corrects *quadringenties milies* (40,000 million HS) to *quadragies milies* (4,000 million HS)); the most painstaking discussion of the "problem of finance" is Griffin (1984) 197–200. On wealth as qualification for acquisition and maintenance of the Principate, see Mratschek (1993) 40–84; on Nero's bankruptcy 54–55 and 66).

Yet the pomp and ceremony (*pompa, tryphē*) used in Nero's image-building, and dismissed in Rome as mere *luxuria*, had its origin in the Hellenistic vision of ideal rule. An integral component in Hellenistic monarchy, it found expression in complex interactions between the expectations of the subjects and the reactions of the ruler (Heinen 1983). A key aspect of Nero's political suicide, along with financial ruin, lay in the eccentric alienating effects and overall creative remolding of the ancient Roman triumph after his return from Greece. (Meier (2008) 599–600 characterizes this "provocative" and "ludicrous"; Holland (2000) 222 "a blasphemous insult" to the Senate. Beard (2007) 268–72 meticulously lists full details of Nero's "bizarre triumphal ceremony" and distinguishes them from standard ritual.) Nero's return to Rome was, as Griffin (2001: 163) and Fantham (in this volume) have demonstrated, "the triumph of an artist"; all Rome was his stage-set. But it was also the role of a *hieronikēs*, a Greek festival victor of classical times, that Nero assumed when he used the triumphal chariot

of Augustus to make his formal entry (*eiselasis*) into the city through a breach in the city walls: first in Naples and then in Rome. To me, the key point in relation to Nero seems to be his reception of Hellenistic elements, observed in triumphal processions even under the Republic (see Flower (2001) 107–9 and Hölscher (1990) 73–84). Hellenism celebrated in this way the arrival of the World Savior (*sōtēr*), to whom homage would be paid under the guise of Apollo or Asclepius (Dio 63.20.5; Versnel (1970) 385). Nero's entry to Rome was "not a real triumph, nor was it a parody mocking the greatest of Roman honours" (Champlin (2003) 234). Both Nero's philhellenism and the sheer unworldliness are evident in his decision to fuse in return to Rome in AD 67 models from both Greek and Roman culture into an artificial new work of performance art.

Suetonius tells us that Nero sought to match Apollo with his singing and Sol with his chariot-driving (*Nero* 53). Accordingly it was only logical that he dedicated his victory prizes, reputedly 1808 in number, either to Apollo, god of song, or to Sol, god of chariot-racers. Suetonius (*Nero* 25.2) also says Nero chose to reverse the canonical procession route of the triumph, driving from the Circus Maximus via the Velabrum to the Palatine Hill. The climax and end of Nero's new-style triumphal procession was not the temple of Jupiter, the state's supreme god, on the Capitol (according to Dio 63.20.4 this was an interim stop that Suetonius leaves unmentioned), but the temple of his own patron, Apollo. A precedent existed in that Virgil, in his shield description (*Aeneid* 8.720; Miller (2009) 54–94), had moved the location of the post-Actium triumph to the temple of Apollo Palatinus, on the threshold of which Augustus would examine the tributes of conquered peoples before having them affixed to the door posts of the temple in dedication. Now Nero, the new victor, would not appear as a personification of Jupiter, but in the role of Apollo: over the purple triumphal robe he wore a cloak (*chlamys*) embroidered with stars of gold; his head bore not a laurel wreath but an Olympic wreath of olive leaves, his hand held the Delphic laurel; the customary ivory scepter, however, is not mentioned (Suetonius, *Nero* 25.1; Dio 63.20.3; Versnel (1970) 56–7).

This Greek recasting – "alienation" or *Verfremdung* in Brecht's sense – of the ancient Roman triumph signaled vividly to the spectators that victory in art and sport was in no way inferior to military victory in politics, and that it was Nero, "as the first among all Romans since the world began," who had won this victory. As "universal victor" (*pantonikēs*) in all the Hellenic contests, Nero had not only outshone the victors of the four classical festivals (*periodonikai*): he also no longer bothered to enumerate his victories in comparison to the threefold triumph of Octavian in 29 BC and of Romulus at the beginning of the triumphal Fasti.

Nero laid out his prizes round the base of the obelisk from the temple of Sol in Heliopolis, then started chariot-racing round it, bringing the games to their climax (Dio 63.21.1). But this new interpretation and the public disavowal of both the Roman and Greek elites' most important rituals – the wall breach, which for the Greeks bound up their very identity with their "sacred" games, and the triumph, which for Romans inalienably represented their claim to rule and their political achievements – cost Nero the consent of the politically influential in both east and west. "What victory could possibly be more futile" asked Senator Cassius Dio, "than that which earned Nero the olive branch (in Olympia), the laurel (in Delphi), the ivy branch (at the Nemean Games) and the pine wreath (at the Isthmian Games), but deprived him of the political crown?" (63.9.3; Blech (1982) 127–38).

Nero died a stagy death by his own hand. His taste for Hellenic culture and Hellenic ostentation was duly reflected in the committal of his body by his Egyptian nurses and his Greek freedwoman Acte, with Greek funerary pomp, to a sumptuous sarcophagus of red-veined Egyptian porphyry valued at 200,000 sesterces (Suetonius, *Nero* 50). Even so, the key to understanding Nero is not simply his philhellenism, which was, as it were, purposefully designed, an "artificial product" that created a symbiosis of Greek and Roman culture with significance for the future. It is also Nero's aesthetic experimentation, the means by which he persistently extended the projection of a godlike image until it burst the acceptable confines of ambition. Like his great role-model Augustus, he conceived his political role while emperor as a drama, theatrically presented in a series of ever-changing images – as Lord of the Golden Age, Liberator of the Greeks, Universal Victor, and latter-day Phoebus Apollo with his lyre, sun-chariot and radiate crown. (See Suetonius, *Augustus* 99.1 on the *mimum vitae*; Seneca reiterates the conceit at *Epistles* 80.7. For the world as a theater stage (*theatrum mundi*) see Mratschek (2007) 28.) What, after all, did theater mean to the Roman elite, if not a microcosm of power, created, as Pliny put it, to turn the subjects into "applauding spectators of an emperor on the political stage"? (*Panegyricus* 46.4; see Bartsch (1994) 31).

Even in death Nero lived on: ambivalent, fêted, a star. While the Roman populace might have taken to the streets on the news of his death wearing liberty-caps, nonetheless Nero's grave long continued to be strewn with fresh flowers, his portrait to be displayed on the orator's rostra (only the popular Marcus Aurelius was similarly honored), and his edicts consulted (Suetonius, *Nero* 57 vs. Fronto, *Letters* 4.12.4). The outsider on the imperial throne would have felt gratified by the thought that with his last words "qualis artifex pereo" ("what an artist dies in me") he had styled himself for all time in the collective memory of later generations as an artist – while all traces of his political omnipresence (including monumental prestige projects such as the Golden House and his own face on the Colossus of Nero) were expunged. (On Nero's famous "last words" in Suetonius, *Nero* 49.1, see Connors (1994) 230; for Nero's artistic self-fulfillment, see Griffin (2001) 160–63, 208–10; Elsner-Masters (1994) 4–5; Champlin (2003) 236; Flower (2006) 196–212; Meier (2008) 573, 603; and Fantham (in this volume). On the *damnatio memoriae*, see Bergmann and Zanker (1981); Eck (2000); Flower (2006) 212–23.)

What survives of Nero includes his theomorphic image as ruler – the image of the radiate-crowned charioteer sun god lent permanence by the activity of the imperial mint, ultimately representing Sol Invictus, the Unconquered Sun (Bergmann (1998) 218, plate 41–42, 46). The newly formulated image adapted from pagan myth had sufficient charismatic power to ensure that in about AD 300, on the gold-hued mosaic from the Vatican necropolis, Christ himself was represented as Helios with radiate nimbus, driving the sun-chariot (Wallraff (2001) 158–62, fig. 13).

FURTHER READING

Sources: Nero's fascination with Greek culture has been comprehensively documented by Smallwood (1967), in Sherk's translation (2001), and in the studies by Erim (1989), Reynolds (1981) and Smith (1987) on the excavations at Aphrodisias.

Imperial image and wealth: The bibliography of works on Nero is vast and spans centuries. The diverse research methods and interpretative approaches used to analyze Nero are outlined

in Meier's survey (2008) of the emperor's last years. Influential biographies written by Griffin (2001) and Champlin (2003), together with two seminal collections of articles edited by Elsner and Masters (1994) and Croisille and Perrin (2002), all provide invaluable help in decoding the myths surrounding Nero.

Griffin (2001) and Millar (2001) provide careful accounts of Nero's state income and spending. Mratschek (1993) sheds light on the social position of contemporary literati and the relationship between power and wealth at the imperial court. For further reading on literature and politics in the Age of Nero, see Bartsch (1994), Flower (2006), Nauta (2010), and Sullivan (1985).

Philhellenism: Of the numerous valuable studies devoted to the historical and ideological background of Hellenistic practices of governance, Bringmann (1993), Chaniotis (2006), Ferrary (1988), and Habicht (1970) offer the most compelling analyses. Nero's extravagant plans for the integration of Roman and Greek culture (Wallace-Hadrill (1983), Griffin (2001), Alcock (1994), Bergmann (1994), Champlin (2003)) have received less attention from researchers than his "un-Roman" philhellenism (Schumann (1930), Cizek (1972), Nöske (2004), etc.). Despite Swain's (1996) commendable efforts, no one has yet written a work that considers the rise of the Greek elites from Augustus to the Second Sophistic in terms of the key role played by education (*paideia*).

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PART II

The Empire

CHAPTER 4

The Empire in the Age of Nero

Myles Lavan

"Empire" is a slippery word in Roman studies. It is used both of the monarchic system instituted by Augustus ("the Empire" as opposed to "the Republic") and of the vast territory conquered and ruled by Rome ("the Roman Empire"). The ambiguity is one that we have inherited from the Romans themselves. The Latin word *imperium* similarly encompasses both Rome's provincial empire and the emperor's authority. Seneca, for example, writes of Roman greed reaching beyond "the boundaries of the empire" (*imperii fines*, *Dialogues* 12.10.2) and of Augustus sharing some of "the burden of empire" (*onus imperii*, *Dialogues* 6.2.3) with his nephew Marcellus. Both these senses are relatively late developments (Richardson (2008)). *Imperium* originally meant "power" or "command" and was the technical term for the legal authority of the higher magistrates (consuls, praetors, and provincial governors). It is not until the first century BC that we first find references to the "the *imperium* of the Roman people" (*imperium populi Romani*), and even then it is used in the abstract – meaning "Roman supremacy" or "Roman dominion." Only in the Augustan period does it develop the concrete sense of a bounded territory that is subject to Rome. This is precisely the same period in which it also comes to be used of the power and office of the emperor. The slippage between the two senses reflects the success of the emperors in claiming credit for the preservation and expansion of the empire, thus creating an ideological connection between monarchy and Roman power (Ando (2000) 277–335). But it is always worth distinguishing between the two. After all, Rome had an empire long before it had an emperor. To understand the structures of power in which Neronian literature is embedded, we need to consider not only the relationship between the emperor and the Roman elite but also their collective implication in the subjection of the provinces to Roman rule.

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The Principate

The political system created by Augustus was founded on the myth that the emperor was not a monarch, but the first among equals. Augustus and most of his successors endeavored to obfuscate the autocratic aspect of politics and emphasize continuity with the republican past. As late as the reign of Nero, Latin has no clear equivalent for the English "emperor" – no single, exclusive term for the position occupied by Augustus and his successors. The closest is *princeps*, which means something like "leading citizen." Seneca in his *On Clemency*, a treatise on rulership addressed to the young Nero, refers to the emperor as *princeps* throughout. But the appellation was not exclusive to the emperor: there was room in the state for other "leading citizens" – other *principes* (see, e.g., Seneca, *Dialogues* 5.2.3 and 11.14.1; on imperial titles, see Dickey (2002) 94–104). The ambiguity of *princeps* – simultaneously a specific term for the emperor and a generic term for all the greatest aristocrats – is typical of the style of the Augustan regime. But such language should not obscure the emperor's supremacy. Like his predecessors, Nero was a monarch in all but name.

An earlier generation of scholarship focused on the legal bases of the emperor's position – the various powers (notably *imperium proconsulare* and *tribunicia potestas*) that were granted by the Senate and ratified by an assembly of the people (see Brunt (1977)). There is certainly an important juristic element to Roman political culture, and both the Senate and successive emperors invested in the idea that the *princeps* functioned within a legal framework. But it would be wrong to think that these legal grants were the basis of the emperor's power – or that they defined its limits. The real foundations of his position were his *de facto* control of the armies, his command of a private fortune that vastly exceeded the wealth of the richest senators, and his influence over senatorial and equestrian careers and other privileges, which forced ambitious aristocrats to compete for his favor.

Ensuring the loyalty of the armies was crucial, as the civil wars of the first century BC had shown. Particularly important was the Praetorian Guard, the force of approximately 6,000 men that was based in the city of Rome and guarded the emperor. Its commanders and officers were personally appointed by the emperor, while the rank and file were regular recipients of imperial largesse. Nero made generous payments ("donatives") to each and every guardsman on his accession and again after the murder of Agrippina in AD 59 and the suppression of the Pisonian conspiracy in AD 65. Similar efforts were made to secure the loyalty of the provincial armies and their commanders. One of Augustus' most important innovations was to separate the administration of peaceful and militarized provinces (Millar (1966)). He left the former (the so-called "senatorial" provinces) to be governed in the traditional way by senatorial proconsuls, but took personal responsibility for the latter (the "imperial" provinces), delegating the business of governing to subordinates or legates (*legati*). These legates were, with a few exceptions, also drawn from the Senate. The key difference lay in the mode of appointment. Whereas the governors of the senatorial provinces were chosen by lot from the outgoing magistrates and served for a single year, the governors of the imperial provinces were appointed by the emperor and served at his pleasure. As a result the provincial armies were at all times commanded by men who had been personally selected

by the emperor (for their loyalty as much as their ability) and were beholden to him for that honor. The emperors also sought to cultivate a special relationship with the army in order to secure the allegiance of the troops (Campbell (1984)). Soldiers swore an oath to protect the emperor and carried his image among their standards. The decorations and promotions they received were granted in his name.

A second pillar of the *princeps*' power was economic. His vast private wealth included estates, herds, mines, and quarries throughout the empire (Millar (1977) 175–89; Crawford (1976)). It was swelled by bequests, confiscated properties and plunder from campaigns. So great was the emperor's fortune that his liberality could extend not only to private individuals but to the state itself. Nero boasted of the annual subventions the *res publica* received from his private funds (Tacitus, *Annals* 15.18.3). Moreover, the procurators who administered the emperor's private wealth and income were also responsible for the revenues of the imperial provinces, and the emperor seems to have enjoyed the same freedom in the management of these nominally public funds as over his own fortune. The legal question of precisely where the line was drawn between the emperor's private income and the public revenues he administered continues to exercise modern scholars and seems to have confused contemporaries as well (Brunt (1990) 134–62, 347–53; Millar (1977) 175–201). But it was of little practical importance. Both were equally his to command.

The emperor took advantage of his great wealth to make gifts of land and money to both individuals and communities (e.g. Suetonius, *Nero* 10.1, 30.3). But these are only a small part of the much broader phenomenon of imperial patronage (Saller (1982) 41–5). Most of the offices and honors for which the aristocracy competed were in the emperor's gift. The military tribunates and junior administrative posts that were the first rungs on the ladder of the senatorial career (the *cursus honorum*) were allocated by the emperor. So too were the newly created administrative positions in Italy (the post of urban prefect and various other prefectures and curatorships), the governorships of imperial provinces, and legionary commands. The traditional magistracies (quaestor, tribune of the plebs, aedile, praetor and consul) were filled by election in the Senate, but the emperor could still exert considerable influence by exercising his right to reject some candidates or by giving his particular support to others by "commending" them. At some stage in the first century, perhaps as early as the reign of Tiberius, the consulship itself ceased to be an elected office and became an imperial appointment. Imperial favor was thus essential for an ambitious senator. The same was true for equestrians. All the prestigious and lucrative administrative positions open to them were the emperor's to fill – various military commands, the provincial procuratorships (managing the emperor's property and, in the imperial provinces, public revenues), the handful of equestrian governorships, and, at the summit of an equestrian career, the prefectures of Egypt, the Praetorian Guard, the Watch, and the Grain Supply. For those who wished to see themselves or their sons elevated to the Senate, only the emperor could grant the senatorial status required to stand for the quaestorship.

The emperor's patronage was not limited to senatorial and equestrian careers. Countless other privileges for individuals and communities could be obtained by imperial grant, including equestrian status, Roman citizenship, various degrees of fiscal immunity and even – in a characteristically Roman exercise in legal fiction – the right for a freedman to call himself freeborn, which Nero granted to the actor Paris (Tacitus, *Annals* 27.3).

The emperor's powers of patronage were magnified by the fact that the most powerful senators and equestrians were great patrons themselves. Men of various ranks attached themselves to them as friends, protégés, and clients. Associations (*collegia*) and whole cities looked to them for the furtherance of their interests. Their success as patrons depended to a considerable extent on their ability to broker imperial favors for their followers, further compounding their dependence on the emperor (the tenth book of Pliny's *Letters* offers many examples from a slightly later period). The greatest aristocrats were thus bound to the emperor and their dependents were similarly bound to them – and so on in a web of patronage that reached both down to lower levels of society and out into the provinces. The fabric of this web was a potent compound of moral obligation (a sense of indebtedness for past favors) and self-interested calculation (an awareness of the need to secure future favors). (On the scope of imperial patronage, see Millar (1977) esp. chs. 4, 6, and 8; Saller (1982) ch. 2; Roller (2001) ch. 3; on brokering imperial favors, see Saller (1982) esp. 74–7.) The emperor's support was thus key to success in the competition for power, wealth, and honor. It gave aristocrats access to the prestige of high office, opened up opportunities for enrichment in Italy and the provinces (not to mention gifts from the emperor), and bolstered their powers of patronage. Whatever the rivalry between the emperor and the Senate as a whole, it was always rational for individual senators to seek imperial favor.

For all his power, the emperor's position was also vulnerable, as the many conspiracies of the Julio-Claudian period reveal. Of the five Julio-Claudian emperors, only Augustus and Tiberius seem to have died natural deaths (and even Tiberius' end drew rumors of foul play). Tacitus and some modern scholars lavish attention on Thrasea Paetus and the so-called "Stoic opposition" (MacMullen (1966) chs. 1 and 2), but the real danger was not from any movement to restore the Republic. In the confusion that followed the murder of Gaius (Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 19.248–73), some senators may have entertained serious hopes of abolishing the Principate. But the majority were more concerned with the question of which of them should be *princeps* after Gaius' failure to leave an obvious successor had left the field wide open. In any case their plans came to naught when the Praetorian Guard forestalled the Senate's deliberations by proclaiming Claudius emperor. The real threat to reigning emperors was from those who saw themselves – or were seen by others – as potential rivals. One of the distinctive features of the monarchic system created by Augustus was the lack of an explicit hereditary principle, let alone a clear law of succession. Although the Julio-Claudian emperors developed a range of strategies for marking out one or more individuals as intended successors, such favor was not enough in itself. The would-be emperor had to seize power by securing the support of the Praetorian Guard, the Senate, the armies, and other constituencies and jealously guard it against rival claimants.

No one in the age of Nero could quite be certain of the limits of what was politically possible – and so how wide the field of potential rivals really was. Family ties were clearly important. All the emperors thus far had been able to trace some connection to their predecessors and especially to Augustus, though the connections had become increasingly tenuous. Tiberius and Gaius could claim direct descent, albeit through adoption (Tiberius was Augustus' adopted son and Gaius was Tiberius' grandson through the adoption of his father Germanicus). But Claudius became emperor without being a direct descendant of Augustus or any of his successors. His claim rested on

weaker ties – being the nephew of Tiberius, the uncle of Gaius, and the grandson of Augustus' sister. Nero, besides being Claudius' adopted son, could again boast direct descent from Augustus' as his great-great-grandson, but only through three generations of women, whereas Roman succession normally operated through the male line alone. The precedent for power passing along weaker lines of connection made for an ever-widening pool of senators with an equally good claim to imperial descent. Hence Nero's anxieties about the other descendants of Augustus – M. Junius Silanus (killed in AD 54), Rubellius Plautus (killed in 62), Silanus' brother Decimus (killed in 64) and his nephew Lucius (killed in 65).

Yet the conspiracies of the period, real and invented (given the nature of conspiracy, it is often impossible to tell the difference), show that imperial blood was not thought essential. It was clearly conceivable that the great aristocrats of the Senate might base a claim to power on marriage into the imperial family or even on the luster of their own names alone. Men like Calpurnius Piso, Domitius Corbulo, and Verginius Rufus were all seen as potential emperors. Here the rules of the game were being written on the fly. Pedigree still seemed essential. Who would have bet on Vespasian – a first-generation senator – as a future emperor? It also appeared that the danger was from rivals in Rome, with the loyalty of the Praetorian Guard being crucial. The vast majority of conspiracies had been centered on Rome, with provincial revolts by Cn. Cornelius Lentulus Gaetulicus in AD 39 and L. Arruntius Furius Camillus Scribonianus in AD 42 being the only significant exceptions. In the confusion that followed the murder of Gaius, it was the Guard that won the throne for Claudius, while other would-be contenders who commanded substantial armies in the provinces were left behind by events. It was only the civil wars of AD 68–9 that would reveal what Tacitus famously called "the secret of empire" (*arcanum imperii*) – "that emperors can be made elsewhere than Rome" (*Histories* 1.4.2). But it was already clear that the greatest aristocrats in the Senate, especially those with a connection to the imperial house, posed a serious threat to the emperor.

All emperors had to protect themselves from such rivals. Yet the Senate as a whole was indispensable. It provided the high administrators who governed the provinces and commanded the legions, its great aristocrats lay at the centre of the web of patronage that bound the empire together, and it was a key source of legitimacy. All the Julio-Claudian emperors looked to the Senate for confirmation of their authority at the start of their reigns (while ratification by the people was postponed for weeks or even months) and chose to act through the Senate – rather than unilaterally or through the popular assemblies – for most of their public business. In the ideology of the Principate, the Senate was the emperor's partner in ruling the empire.

It is this paradox – that the emperors were both threatened by, and dependent upon, the Senate – that explains the complex and contradictory relationship between the two, which is one of the distinctive features of the Augustan Principate (see especially Hopkins (1983) ch. 3). It can be seen for example in the simultaneous erosion and expansion of the Senate's powers and privileges under the Julio-Claudian emperors. The element of erosion is obvious. The unquestioned predominance of the *princeps* gave the lie to the traditional idea of the Senate as a body of equals. The growing imperial administration gave equestrians and even freedmen access to positions of military and fiscal responsibility that had once been the preserve of senators alone. With the increasing importance of imperial favors, proximity to the emperor became a new source of power, elevating the

women, freedmen, and slaves of the emperor's household to unprecedented heights of power and prestige. The threat that these developments posed for the traditional social order is obvious from the senatorial literature of the period (e.g. in Seneca's remarks about Roman nobles who are beholden to slaves: *De Beneficiis* 3.28.5; *Letters* 47.8–9).

Yet the Julio-Claudian emperors also oversaw a marked expansion in the Senate's competences (Brunt (1984)). The Senate gradually replaced the popular assemblies as the source of law. It acquired new electoral powers when Tiberius transferred the election of magistrates from the assemblies to the Senate, leaving the people to ratify the single list of candidates it recommended. It also began to play an unprecedented role as a court of law, usurping the function of the traditional standing courts (*quaestiones*) in cases of great public significance. The Julio-Claudian period also saw a marked increase in the prestige of the senatorial order. Augustus had taken a number of steps to exalt senators and their families above the rest of the society. He instituted a new property qualification (1,000,000 sesterces) significantly higher than that required for equestrian status (400,000 sesterces). After a senator found himself without a seat in a theater in Puteoli, he required the cities of the empire to set aside the first row of seats at public spectacles for use by senators. He reserved for sons of senators the automatic right to wear the broad stripe (*latus clavus*) on their tunic, the traditional mark of aspiration to a senatorial career. Other would-be senators had to receive imperial approval. His social legislation treated senators, their descendants for three generations, and their wives as a class apart, with special privileges and restrictions (notably on intermarriage with freedmen and actors). Thus the Senate under the Julio-Claudians was socially and politically pre-eminent as never before.

The character of the relationship between emperor and Senate fluctuated over the course of the Julio-Claudian period as the early emperors experimented with different styles of rule and the senatorial aristocracy adapted to a new political culture centered on the imperial court (Wallace-Hadrill (1996); Winterling (2009)). Augustus and Tiberius were the most clearly committed to the myth of the *princeps* as first among equals, acting through the Senate wherever possible and doing their utmost to obscure the monarchical aspect of their position (Brunt (1984)). Gaius, in his short reign, seems to have experimented with a more autocratic style, flaunting his independence of the Senate and challenging the prestige of the senatorial order – most famously by designating his horse consul. Claudius tried to return to the Augustan model, but his relationship with the Senate was complicated by the fact that he had needed the Praetorian Guard to assert his claim to power over senatorial rivals at the beginning of his reign. It was further tested by the increasingly obvious power of imperial freedmen, the greatest of whom posed a growing challenge to the senatorial order's traditional monopoly on power, wealth, and prestige. Nero promised in his accession speech to rule by the example of Augustus (Suetonius, *Nero* 10) and lived up to that promise in his early years by fostering the prestige and privileges of the Senate. Later, however, he distanced himself from the Senate and adopted a more monarchical imperial style. (Winterling (2003) on Caligula and Champlin (2003) on Nero are provocative attempts to rediscover the political rationality of the supposedly pathological behavior of these emperors.)

Underlying these obvious differences of style, however, was a consistent ambivalence in the relationship between emperor and Senate. Not even Augustus and Tiberius could avoid persecuting those senators they saw as a threat. Conversely, not even Gaius or Nero

could really do without the Senate. Suetonius tells us that Nero once remarked, after having several senators killed, that "none of his predecessors had realized how powerful they were" and hinted "that he would not spare the rest of the Senate but would one day erase that order from the state and entrust the provinces and armies to *equites* and freedmen" (Suetonius, *Nero* 37.3). Yet it is significant that Nero's vision of liberation from the Senate remained a fantasy. This ambivalent relationship was a structural feature of the Augustan system.

Governing the Provinces

If the relationship between emperor and Senate figures large in Neronian literature, it is because so much of it was written by men who moved within court circles. Indeed many writers were senators or equestrians themselves: Seneca, Lucan, and possibly Petronius were senators; Persius and Columella were equestrians. It would be wrong to presume that the rest of the Roman world was equally preoccupied with the problem of monarchy. For most of the population of the empire, the emperor was a distant figure. They were at the mercy of local municipal authorities and the governors, legionary commanders, and other officials who exercised Roman power in the provinces. This was a broader structure of domination in which all members of the Roman elite were equally complicit, whatever their relationship to the *princeps*.

Romans liked to think of themselves as rulers of the whole world. The emperor Augustus boasted of subjecting the world (*orbis terrarum*) to the power of the Roman people (*Achievements of the Divine Augustus*, preface). Pliny the Elder styled the Roman people "conqueror of all peoples" (*uictor omnium gentium*, *Natural History* 3.5). These texts participate in a cosmocratic ideology that can be traced back at least as far as Pompey the Great and has its antecedents in the rhetoric of Alexander and his successors (Nicolet (1991) 29–47). Such boasts of universal dominion are not quite as patently absurd as they might appear. In the Roman imagination, the *imperium Romanum* extended as far as Rome's commands were obeyed. It was not limited to the provinces that were directly subject to Roman governors, but also encompassed the many nominally independent cities scattered within the provinces and even those independent kingdoms and peoples outside the provinces that acknowledged (or were said to acknowledge) Roman supremacy. What the Romans aspired to was an empire of control, not an empire of administration (Whittaker (1994) 17; Lintott (1993) 22).

Even within the directly administered provinces, the ambitions of Roman government were limited. They had to be. Rome's provinces extended across some 3.5 million km^2, a territory currently governed by more than 30 modern states, and encompassed a population of somewhere between 40 and 70 million (Frier (2000)). Yet the governance of this vast empire was the responsibility of fewer than 150 officials of senatorial and equestrian rank – provincial governors (called proconsuls in the senatorial provinces and *legati Augusti*, procurators or prefect in the imperial provinces), treasury officers (aediles in the senatorial and procurators in the imperial provinces), and legionary commanders. Governors were assisted by a small staff of friends and dependents, supplemented by some seconded soldiers. But the total number involved in administration was minuscule,

given the size of the empire (Bowman (1996) 351–3; see Hopkins (1980) 121 for an interesting comparison with the Chinese empire in the twelfth century AD).

These limited administrative resources sufficed because the Roman authorities were content to concern themselves with suppressing large-scale threats to Roman rule, ensuring that each city delivered its tribute to Rome, and administering justice in cases involving Roman citizens, local notables, or capital crimes (Ando (2006); Bowman (1996); Jones (1974) 1–34). All other aspects of governance were left to the cities of the empire to manage themselves. The list is long and includes policing smaller-scale violence in the city and countryside, the actual collection of taxes, jurisdiction in less important cases, the regulation of city markets, the supervision of the grain supply, the construction and maintenance of public buildings, streets, sewers and water supply, and the supervision of public cult. Managing the community's relations with the gods was an important aspect of government in the ancient world, which included building and maintaining temples, appointing priests, and celebrating sacrifices, festivals, and games.

The long-term success of this system was due to Rome's ability to align the interests of local elites with her own. Although there was considerable variation in local political structures, Rome ensured one way or another that power was concentrated in the hands of the propertied classes. In most cities, government was the preserve of a council (usually called an *ordo* in the west and a *boule* in the east) whose members were subject to a formal or *de facto* property qualification and were appointed for life. These local elites stood to gain much from Roman rule – an external power to underwrite the inequalities of power and wealth within their own communities, additional legal privileges under Roman law as councilors and (often) Roman citizens, and the possibility of elevation to equestrian and even senatorial rank, with opportunities for profitable employment in the administration of the empire. It was thus in their own interest to ensure that their cities fulfilled their obligations to Rome (Woolf (1998) on Gaul; Brunt (1976); de Ste Croix (1981) 307–17).

The imposition of order was one of the Romans' proudest achievements. Latin literature abounds in claims that the empire brought peace both to Rome and to the provinces. So ubiquitous is the rhetoric of peace that authors like Pliny the Elder could treat the *pax Romana* as synonymous with the *imperium Romanum*, referring to the "boundless majesty of the Roman peace" (*immensa Romanae pacis maiestas*, *Natural History* 27.3) Romans had few qualms about admitting that this peace was often imposed, and sometimes maintained, by force. The aggressiveness of the Roman idea of peace is evident in the widespread use of the verb *pacare* (pacify) as a term for conquest. The *pax Romana* signified a world pacified as much as a world at peace (Woolf (1993b); Weinstock (1960) 45–6). Even so, we should not be too quick to take Roman authors at their word. Nero's reign saw several large-scale revolts in the provinces. In AD 60–1 Boudicca's revolt threatened Roman rule in Britain and saw the destruction of three large Roman cities with their inhabitants (Tacitus, *Agricola* 15–6, *Annals* 14.31–7; Dio 62.1–12). The Jewish revolt that broke out in AD 66 tied up more than four Roman legions at its height, giving the future emperor Vespasian his springboard to power, and dragged on until the capture of the last Jewish fortress at Massada in AD 74 – despite the Flavians' celebration of a triumph in AD 71 (Josephus, *Jewish War*; Tacitus, *Histories* 5). The Gallic revolt incited by Julius Vindex in the last year of Nero's reign seems to have aimed at toppling Nero rather than liberating Gaul

from Roman rule, but it was followed by a major revolt by the Batavians on the lower Rhine, which spread to several Gallic tribes and lasted into AD 70 (Tacitus, *Histories* 4–5). Revolts such as these had been a recurring feature of the Julio-Claudian period, reflecting the social stresses experienced in the first few generations after incorporation into the empire (Dyson (1971, 1975)).

These three revolts are unlikely to have been the only outbreaks of violence in the provinces in this period. Their scale demanded the attention, and captured the imagination, of at least some Roman historians. Unrest on a smaller scale was probably underreported. The Roman elite had so much invested in their claims of world-pacification that they had every reason to underplay the extent of disturbances (Woolf (1993b)). It is striking that the Gallic and Batavian revolt of 69–70, to which Tacitus devotes almost a book and a half of his *Histories* because he is interested in exploring its parallels to the civil wars of AD 69, is passed over as not worth mentioning by Cassius Dio (65.3). Painstaking work has compiled the often exiguous evidence for more than a hundred outbreaks of violence in the first and second centuries AD (Pekáry (1987)). In Nero's reign these include revolts in Spain, Asia Minor, and Africa and riots in Italy and Egypt. There must have been many more incidents that have disappeared from the historical record entirely. Recent work has shown that Rome maintained a military presence in several supposedly peaceful areas well into the second century AD, presumably to suppress unrest (Mattern (1999) 101–4; Woolf (1998) 29–34; Isaac (1992) chs. 2–3). We also know that "banditry" (*latrocinium*) – a label that can hide a multitude of sins – was rife in many areas of the empire (Shaw (1984)). It would be wrong to see all such unrest as resistance to Rome. Given the paucity of the evidence and the fact that we are largely dependent on Roman representations of local motives, it is often difficult to distinguish revolts against Roman rule from banditry, social conflicts within local communities, and even provincial support for imperial contenders (as seems to have been the case with Vindex's revolt in 68). Roman texts rarely trouble themselves with such distinctions, since all violent unrest was seen as a threat to the Roman order. But we can be confident that the provinces were considerably less peaceful than Roman authors would have us believe.

If Roman texts tend to exaggerate the orderliness of the provinces, they are surprisingly silent about the cultural effects of Roman rule. Although it is a topos of modern scholarship that Rome embraced a civilizing mission, the evidence for this is surprisingly thin (Woolf (1998) ch. 3 and Veyne (1993) make the best case for a "civilizing ethos"). The vast majority of Roman writers pay little or no attention to social and cultural change in the provinces. Yet it is clear from the archaeological record that the century preceding Nero's accession was a transformative period for much of the Mediterranean world, particularly in the west. The most dramatic development was the appearance of cities across vast areas of Gaul, Spain, and Africa that had little or no history of urbanization. Change can also be seen in the countryside – notably in the rapid spread of Italian-style villas of unprecedented complexity and scale. It extended to all aspects of life. There is evidence of widespread changes in consumption (new tastes for wine, olive oil, fish sauce, and Italian-style ceramics), funerary practice (the spread of cremation and Latin epitaphs), and cult (new gods, new priests, new styles of religious architecture). Although the transformation was most dramatic in the west, the eastern provinces were not unaffected. A similar burst of urbanization can be seen in less Hellenized

zones such as the interior of western Asia Minor and southern Syria. Even in the many areas where Hellenic culture was well established, Roman influence is evident in public spaces (aqueducts and baths), onomastics (the spread of Hellenized versions of Latin names among the elite), funerary practice, and cult. (For an overview of cultural change in the west, see Woolf (1995) and Keay and Terrenato (2001); for the east, Woolf (1993a).) These developments were not the result of some centrally directed program of "Romanization." The driving force everywhere was local, with provincials adopting and adapting what they saw as Roman practices in order to negotiate both their position within their own communities and their relationship to the wider imperial elite. Nor did this period produce a single, homogeneous "Roman" culture spanning the western provinces (let alone the whole empire). There was considerable variation both within and between provinces. In all areas, change was faster and deeper among local elites and in urbanized and militarized areas. The synthesis reached between local and Roman practices varied from region to region, creating a range of hybrid cultures – "Gallo-Roman," "Romano-British," "Romano-Spanish," etc. But from the perspective of the Mediterranean as a whole, the breadth and depth of cultural change within a relatively short period is striking. It was one of the most profound and lasting effects of Roman power. (Woolf (1998) is a model study of the dynamics of cultural change, focusing on the Gallic provinces. For local initiative as the driving force, see also Cherry (1998) and Fear (1996). On hybrid cultures, see especially Woolf (1995).)

The same period saw the social and political integration of local elites throughout the empire. In Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis*, a satiric broadside unleashed on the memory of Claudius early in Nero's reign, one of the Fates expresses surprise when Mercury orders her to end the failing emperor's life:

> I had wanted to leave him a little more time – until he had given the citizenship to the few who don't have it. He was determined to see all Greeks, Gauls, Spaniards and Britons wearing the toga. But, since it has been decided that some non-citizens be kept for seed and since you command it, so be it. (3.3)

This scornful attack on Claudius' liberal attitude to the citizenship seems to have set the tone for Nero's reign, which saw few large-scale grants of citizenship (though Nero did grant the Latin right – an intermediate status providing some of the privileges of citizenship – to one of the Alpine provinces). But the previous century and a half had already seen a dramatic expansion of the citizenship – once a jealously guarded privilege that had been denied to the Italians as late as 91 BC. Granted to all Italians during and after the Social War (91–88 BC), citizenship was extended to Cisalpine Gaul in 49 BC and to a number of communities in Spain and Africa by Caesar and Augustus. Claudius granted citizenship to more cities in Africa. Meanwhile the Latin right had been granted to many communities in southern Gaul, Spain, Sicily, and the western Alps. Besides these communal grants, there were several further avenues by which individuals acquired citizenship for themselves and their descendants. Non-citizens who served in the army as auxiliaries usually received citizenship upon their discharge (a practice regularized by Claudius) as did men who had served as a magistrate in one of the many communities with the Latin right. Those with connections among the imperial elite might also elicit a personal grant of citizenship from the emperor. The ranks of the citizen body were

further swelled by ex-slaves who had been manumitted (freed) by Roman citizens, provided proper form was observed. Together, these different channels brought Roman citizenship and its privileges to a significant proportion of the upper stratum, especially in the western provinces (Sherwin-White (1973), esp. chs. 8, 9).

This openness to new provincial recruits extended to the highest ranks of the social hierarchy. The *equites* of the equestrian order were the elite of the empire, possessing a fortune of at least 400,000 sesterces and enjoying a range of social and legal privileges. The total membership of the order was probably somewhere in the region of 20,000. In the Republic, only 4 percent of those *equites* whose origin is known came from the provinces. In the Julio-Claudian period that proportion rises to 29 percent – including 10 percent from the eastern provinces (Demougin (1988) 522). Even the rarefied heights of the Senate, the elite of the elite with a membership of around 600, were increasingly open to wealthy and well-connected provincials (Alföldy (1988) 121; Griffin (1984) 251; Griffin (1976) 95–6). As early as 40 BC Cornelius Balbus, a wealthy magnate of the Spanish city of Gades who was not even a Roman citizen by birth, had reached not just the Senate but the consulship itself. We know of around a dozen provincial senators under Augustus and Tiberius. That number rises to about 50 under Nero. By the Flavian period, provincials would account for as much as a third of the Senate. Spaniards and Gauls predominate, but Nero's reign sees a notable increase in the (admittedly small) number of senators from the Greek-speaking east. Although advancement was easier for some provincials than others, the prospect of reaching the highest ranks of imperial society must have played an important role in binding local elites to Roman power.

Power and Privilege in the Roman Empire

Romans prided themselves on their status as an imperial people. They saw themselves as "masters of the world," as Virgil's Jupiter couched his promise of Rome's future greatness (*rerum domini*, *Aeneid* 1.282), or the "masters of the nations," as a Roman general boasts to barbarian tribes in Florus' history of Rome (*domini gentium*, 2.26) (Lavan (2013)). It is easy to be misled by such rhetoric into assuming a sharp divide between Romans and subjects. But here too we should be wary of taking Roman rhetoric at face value. The real impact of Roman power was far more complex.

Traditionally, the most important distinction in Rome's empire had been between citizens and *peregrini* (the technical term for those who lacked citizen status) The simple dichotomy is complicated by the existence of the intermediate status of the Latin right, which in Nero's time was held by many in the Alpine, Gallic, and Spanish provinces and by some freedmen. In the first century AD the practical importance of Roman citizenship was in decline, thanks to the progressive extension of the citizen body and various moves by Augustus and his successors to limit the privileges enjoyed by new citizens in their own communities. By the second century, citizenship would be a pale reflection of the privileged status it once was (Sherwin-White (1973) 264–74; Garnsey (1970) 260–76). In Nero's time, however, it still brought some important benefits. Roman civil law reserved a number of rights for citizens. For example, *peregrini* were not regarded as having full authority over their children and could not inherit under a Roman will. In the provinces, Roman citizens also enjoyed the flexibility of choosing whether to be tried

under local or Roman law. Potentially more important was the protection that citizens enjoyed against judicial violence. They were shielded from summary beating or execution by a governor or other magistrate by the right of appeal (*ius prouocationis*), which had its origins in the early Republic and had been reaffirmed by Augustus (Lintott (1972)). *Peregrini* enjoyed no such protection against the use of force by the Roman authorities. Even when convicted of a crime, citizens might hope to be treated with greater leniency than non-citizens. For example, when Tiberius took measures to suppress astrologers in the city of Rome, the Roman citizens among them got off with exile, while the *peregrini* were executed (Dio 57.15.8; see Garnsey (1970) 261–2, 268–9).

In other spheres, however, the distinction that really mattered was between Italians and provincials, both citizen and non-citizen. This is most obvious with respect to taxation, probably the most widely felt imposition of Roman rule (Corbier (1988); Brunt (1990) 324–46). Although residents of Italy paid what are called "indirect taxes" (including the inheritance tax, the taxes on the sale and manumission of slaves and customs dues), they had enjoyed immunity from the "direct taxes" or tribute (*tributum*) since 167 BC. In contrast, all the inhabitants of the provinces, Roman citizens included, were fully liable to pay tribute on their property. The only exceptions were a handful of cities and individuals with special grants of immunity. Italians enjoyed various other legal privileges. A notable example is the privilege that Augustus instituted to encourage procreation within the citizen body (the *ius trium liberorum*). Residents of Rome and Italy received certain exemptions if they had three or four children respectively. Provincial citizens had to have five children to enjoy the same benefits. There were other advantages that were not enshrined in law, but were no less significant. Many emperors seem to have considered it important to advertise a special concern for the cities of Italy, with the result that Italy benefited disproportionately from imperial euergetism (Patterson (2002)). There was also a degree of snobbery among the elite of Rome and Italy towards those of provincial extraction. Though some provincials – like the New Men of the Republic – were able to turn the label of provinciality to their advantage with a counter-rhetoric of provincial virtue, it was nonetheless easier for notables from Italian cities to rise into the ranks of the equestrian and senatorial orders than it was for their provincial counterparts (Farney (2007) ch. 6).

The geography of privilege is further complicated by the existence of a hierarchy of status among communities as well as individuals (Garnsey and Saller (1987) 26–32; Lintott (1993) 130–2). The most privileged communities were the citizen colonies or *coloniae* (in which Roman citizens, usually veterans, had been settled), the *municipia* (foreign communities which had been granted an Italian-style charter together with citizenship or Latin status), and the "free cities" or *ciuitates liberae* (foreign communities which had been granted some combination of freedom from garrisons and billeting, freedom from the governor's jurisdiction, and, more rarely, freedom from tribute). Fiscal immunity, such as was enjoyed by the cities of Italy, was the greatest prize. It was possessed by a tiny minority of provincial cities. Some of these – *coloniae* which had been granted the "Italian right" or *ius Italicum* – were citizen communities. But others – the most privileged free cities, such as Sparta and Ilium – were largely or entirely peregrine. This was the status that Nero, in his most extravagant display of philhellenism, bestowed on all the cities of Greece in AD 67, boasting that other emperors had freed cities, but only Nero a province (for his speech, see Smallwood (1967) no. 64). It was a huge

concession – and was promptly withdrawn by Vespasian. Autonomy from provincial administration was another aspect of privileged status. All colonies, *municipia*, and free cities were guaranteed some degree of exemption from the governor's authority. But this probably mattered more in theory than in practice. On the one hand, privileged status would not prevent interference on a matter that the governor deemed sufficiently important. On the other, even unprivileged communities enjoyed considerable *de facto* autonomy in the administration of their own affairs. More significant was the gap between all these cities and those communities that had no civic identity at all. These included rural communities subjected (''attributed'') to a neighboring city, tribes administered by military officers, and tenants on vast imperial and private estates (Jacques and Scheid (1990) 187–90, 246–8).

Social status was yet another source of privilege. The empire's governing elite espoused a distinctly aristocratic social ethic. Not for them the principle that all were equal before the law. The dominant attitude is epitomized by a paradox espoused by both Cicero and the younger Pliny: ''equality itself is inequitable'' (*ipsa aequabilitas est iniqua)* is Cicero's verdict on democratic government (*Republic* 1.43). ''There is nothing more unequal than equality itself'' (*nihil est ipsa aequalitate inaequalius*), writes Pliny a century later in a letter commending a provincial governor for his attention to social distinctions (*Letters* 9.5.3). Wherever it reached, Roman power worked to identify and accentuate existing social distinctions, concentrating power in the hands of the propertied classes (who could be trusted to share Rome's interests) and securing their social privileges with legal sanction by integrating them into a clearly stratified imperial elite. At its apex were the senatorial and equestrian orders. Beneath them were the men of ''curial'' rank – the members of the city councils – who probably amounted to a few hundred thousand across the empire. By the second and third centuries AD, special treatment of those of higher status (often called the *honestiores*) was clearly enshrined in Roman jurisprudence – most notably in more lenient penalties (Aubert (2002) 100–3; Garnsey (1970); de Ste Croix (1981)). Such discrimination was not systematized and codified until the mid-second-century, but aristocratic sensibilities will have ensured that it was common in practice even earlier. And there were other privileges besides preferential treatment in the courts to which the wealthy and well-connected might aspire. Some provincials – not all of them Roman citizens – enjoyed personal grants of exemption from tribute, putting them on a par with inhabitants of Italy.

In most of the cases discussed so far, privilege consists in immunity from some or all of the impositions of Roman rule. But some groups benefited more directly from the operations of empire. It is worth considering the redistribution of wealth through taxation. Very rough estimates of the size of the imperial budget in relation to the gross domestic product of the empire suggest that the tax system was extracting between 5 and 10 percent of the product of the empire. (If this seems low, it is worth remembering that most of the population of the empire was living at or close to subsistence level.) These taxes were exacted throughout the empire. Only a privileged few – the inhabitants of Italy and a small number of provincial communities and individuals – were exempt from tribute, and even they paid indirect taxes. Where did these revenues go? Much, somewhere between half and three quarters, went on the imperial army (Rathbone (1996) 309–12; Duncan-Jones (1994) ch. 3). Although military service may have been a hardship for those who were conscripted and resented long service far from home,

the approximately 350,000 men who served in Rome's armies were beneficiaries of empire insofar as provincial taxes supported them at a higher standard of living than most of the rest of the population. They could also look forward to further rewards and privileges when they were discharged (see Campbell (1984) 246–54). In the meantime, many took advantage of their position of power by engaging in extortion and theft with relative impunity. The depredations of soldiers are a recurring complaint of the civilian population throughout the empire (Campbell (1984) 246–54; Isaac (1992) ch. 6). Another group of beneficiaries was the population of the city of Rome, who enjoyed free grain and other imperial benefactions, all paid for by provincial taxes. Then there are the senators, equestrians, and imperial freedmen who occupied the positions of authority in Rome and the provinces. Their powers provided opportunities for peculation. Governors, for example, continued to enrich themselves at the expense of provincials (as is evident from regular activity in the extortion courts), though perhaps on a smaller scale than in the Republic. Besides such self-enrichment, these officials also received substantial salaries from the state (Duncan-Jones (1994) 37–8). The highest-ranking senatorial governors received as much as a million sesterces per year (equal to the total *wealth* of the poorest senators), while the highest-ranking equestrian officials received at least 200,000 sesterces per year. Imperial freedmen and even slaves also received salaries, albeit on a smaller scale.

It should thus be clear that the operations of Roman power did not create a neat divide between beneficiaries and victims of empire. The division between citizens and non-citizens was an important one – but so too were the distinctions between Italians and provincials, between different types of community, and between those of high status and the rest of the population. Other, smaller constituencies profited more directly from empire. All of these distinctions worked separately to create a complex matrix of more and less privileged statuses within the empire.

This complex configuration of power and privilege should make us think carefully about the meaning and function of the category ''Roman'' in this period. References to ''Romans'' are widespread in Roman discourse and perhaps even more so in modern scholarship, where the category is all too often embraced as part of a seductive but simplistic dichotomy between Romans and subjects. But who were the ''Romans'' in this complex and changing world? As mentioned earlier, Roman writers had long espoused an *imperial* identity. They saw themselves as rulers of an empire. Yet it is far from clear where the line between rulers and subjects was to be drawn (see Lavan (2013)). The easy answer is the juridical one – that Romans were all those who possessed Roman citizenship. Many new provincial citizens presumably embraced such a definition, eager to identify themselves as Roman (Majbom Madsen (2009)). But this ceased to be a definitive answer with the extension of citizen status to vast numbers of Italians and then provincials. This inevitably undermined the value of citizenship as a mark of privilege and worked to promote competing – and narrower – definitions of what it was to be Roman. Ethnicity was one obvious source of distinction. Some citizens could and did claim to be more ''Roman'' or ''Italian'' than others. For example, Spaniards who could trace descent from Italian settler stock called themselves *Hispanienses* to distinguish themselves from indigenous Spaniards, whom they called *Hispani* (note the Spanish-born Seneca's disdain for *Hispani* in the passage from the *Apocolocyntosis* quoted above; cf. Martial, *Epigrams* 12 preface and Griffin (1976) 31). Culture provided another possible criterion for defining what it was to be Roman. It can be seen at work in, for

example, Claudius' famous decision to strip citizen status from a Greek citizen who spoke no Latin (Suetonius, *Claudius* 16.2; Dio 60.17.4). Social status and virtue – to an aristocrat they would be the same thing – provided other criteria for distinction (Woolf (1998) 241–2). The key point is that there is no definitive answer. By the middle of the first century AD, "Roman" can only have been a fluid and contested category. Self-professed Romans were always engaged in delimiting – sometimes more, sometimes less generously – the boundaries of their imagined community.

FURTHER READING

The bibliography on the Principate is vast. Particularly helpful are Campbell (1984) on the emperor's personal relationship to the army, Veyne (1990) 322–34, Millar (1977) 133–201 and Brunt (1990) 134–62 on his financial resources, and Saller (1982) 41–58 on his powers of patronage. Hopkins (1983) ch. 3 is by far the best analysis of the structure of the relationship between emperor and Senate. Wallace-Hadrill (1996) and Winterling (2009) describe the effect of the Principate on political culture and the development of a court society. Roller (2001) explores the different ways in which Julio-Claudian writers sought to understand and define the powers and duties of the *princeps*.

For a broader perspective encompassing the social and economic structure of the empire as a whole, see especially Garnsey and Saller (1987), Alföldy (1988), and MacMullen (1974). On the administration of the provinces, see Ando (2006), Bowman (1996), and Eck (2000) (though the latter focuses on a slightly later period). Jones (1974) 1–34 remains an excellent and accessible analysis of the extent to which governance was delegated to the cities. Woolf (1998), Brunt (1990) 276–81, and de Ste Croix (1981) 307–17 discuss the co-option of local elites.

For contrasting views on the impact of Roman rule, compare Ando (2000) (who sees Rome as promising – and delivering – universal benefits and so earning the loyalty of its subjects) with Isaac (1992) (who sees rule by Rome as a harsh imposition that often depended on ongoing coercion). The effects of empire are best understood through case studies of individual provinces. Woolf (1998) is a model study of Gaul. Alcock (1993) analyses the very different effects of Roman rule on Greece. See also Mattingly (2006) and Millett (1990) on Britain; Curchin (2004) and Fear (1996) on Spain; Cherry (1998) on North Africa; Bekker-Nielsen (2008) on Bithynia; and Sartre (2005), Butcher (2003), and Isaac (1992) on Syria and Palestine.

For more on how Romans imagined their imperial project, see Mattern (1999), Woolf (1998) ch. 3, Woolf (1993b), Veyne (1993), Nicolet (1991), Brunt (1990) 288–323, and Lavan (2013). Dench (2005) is a suggestive discussion of a number of aspects of Roman identity. Woolf (1998) esp. 238–49 and Woolf (1993a) provide provincial perspectives.

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CHAPTER 5

Apollo in Arms: Nero at the Frontier

David Braund

Nero's accession to power at Rome raised a series of questions about the empire at large. A change of emperor brought a new personality to bear on the many relationships and issues entailed in the management, security, and possible extension of Rome's sprawling imperial realm. A very large part of the emperor's work was to respond to the flurry of aspirations, requests, and demands of the many powerful individuals and communities of the empire, whether situated inside or outside the territories directly administered by Roman officials. Especially important were the powers and regions which could pose the greatest threat to imperial security, while these also tended to offer the greatest opportunities. For while so much of Roman imperial policy was responsive to events, there was also scope for initiative and imperialist adventure. The great adventure of the previous regime had been Claudius' invasion of Britain in AD 43, which had realized the ambitions voiced in Rome and in Britain since the forays of Julius Caesar a century earlier. Almost all Nero's young life had been spent amid the repeated celebration of Claudius' British expedition. The flamboyant new ruler might well seek to match and surpass the military achievements of his famously feeble predecessor.

In that regard as in so much else, the accession of Nero was played out in an atmosphere of comparison and contrast with what had gone before, despite the fact that Rome's imperial policy was largely a matter of complex continuities. And the new emperor's youthful energy was a key feature of that contrast with the past. While some may have wondered about the young man's ability and knowledge, his vigor might be more important. Nero could be expected to stay in power beyond the lives of most of his contemporaries. A good relationship with the new emperor was all the more vital because he would probably rule for at least half a century to come. Of course there were no certainties: a coup had cut short the life of Gaius in AD 41 and young princes had met early deaths before, as Britannicus (his name echoing Claudius' achievement) was

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soon to do. However, Augustus, Tiberius, and even sickly Claudius had lived to a ripe enough age: small wonder that poets sang of the countless years of Nero's rule to come. Accordingly, the accession of Nero was a momentous event both in the management and in the experience of Rome's imperial power, not least for the empire's neighbors. Questions abounded. What did the change of emperor mean for Claudius' initiative in Britain? How would Nero's regime handle the Parthians and the abiding hostilities in the east? Would Claudius' successes in the Black Sea be taken any further? And what of the long frontier across northern Europe and the challenging margins of North Africa and Egypt?

Such questions were highly charged, for they amounted to an even more profound question: what kind of emperor would Nero be? Quite apart from the practical realities of imperial rule (armies, diplomacy, strategy, and more), the emperor's conduct in dealing with the empire at large was a key criterion in any assessment of his worth, by his contemporaries as well as later generations. The emperor needed to show himself to be a commander, literally an *imperator*. That was why Claudius had made so much of Britain, though he himself spent no more than a few days there. The emperor could take credit for the success of his generals, but there should be success in arms. Eyes were also on his handling of diplomacy. The new young *princeps* must be seen to command the respect and obedience of foreign powers, as had his predecessors by and large. Accordingly, the handling of the empire was absolutely central to the perception of the emperor in Rome itself, not only in the provinces or in the courts of distant kings. That is why ancient writers regularly offer broad evaluations of emperors' conduct in this field.

Meanwhile, insofar as Claudius' regime was posthumously constructed as an onslaught upon the very people of Rome – a kind of civil war – there was a particular drive under Nero to redirect Roman power away from the oppression of Romans, and towards the subjugation of others. As Lucan stressed at the start of his *Bellum Civile*, Roman military might was for fighting Parthians and the like, not itself (Wiseman (1982)).

Of course the largely hostile tradition on Nero was concerned to show his inadequacies in these crucial matters of war and empire. Nero is repeatedly portrayed as unmilitary, with his mind directed away from the serious demands of imperial rule towards the fripperies of charioteering, musical performance, and the high life (see Fantham in this volume). Further, stress his critics, when he did take an interest in imperial rule and foreign affairs, his interventions were absurd or perverse. Such success as Rome had under Nero, critics carped, was achieved not because of him but in spite of him. His great triumphal procession was actually the nervous return to Rome to celebrate his murder of his ghastly mother; his primary interest outside Rome was a ridiculously exaggerated commitment to the dubious cultural practices of the Greeks. And so on.

The extensive fog of hostility, which clouds almost all the historical record on Nero, makes historical analysis extraordinarily difficult. It is especially hard to identify or assess Nero's personal engagement with the empire at large. Naturally, the hostile tradition tends to link him personally to the most extravagant or futile schemes of his reign – the vain search for Dido's treasure in Africa, the attempt to cut a canal at Corinth (Suetonius, *Nero* 19), the quest for an amber route from the Baltic and more besides (Braund (1983); cf. Hine (2006) 64 on Pliny, *Natural History* 37.45).

Nero the man remains elusive. However, we can certainly observe the key developments in Rome's "foreign policy" under Nero and at times we may be confident enough that Nero took a particular interest in them. The damning tradition about him proves, at least

in this regard, to be substantially misleading. For, like his imperial predecessors, Nero was very much concerned to show himself as a successful commander and diplomat.

In fact the favorite contrast between militarism and cultural pursuits was readily resolved in Nero's favorite figure of Apollo (Champlin (2003b)). While Nero pointed to Apollo as his precedent and archetype in music and the like, he could also insist upon Apollo as a god of war. In a contemporary panegyric, *The Praise of Piso*, a poet observed that the hand of Apollo which plucked the harp also plucked the bowstring. Apollo was a very military deity as well as a patron of culture, as Augustus had already made clear (Zanker (1989)). Meanwhile, Nero's multiple concerns with the Greek east – with Greece itself, with Alexandria, with the Caucasus and above all with Armenia and the Parthians – suggest a consistent commitment there. Meanwhile there are strong enough indications of Nero's personal good standing in the east. After Nero's death, it was in the Greek east that pretenders emerged claiming to be Nero himself: at least one seems to have roused significant local support there, however fleetingly (Gallivan (1973)). While the close chronology of events at the frontier under Nero is often uncertain, the broad picture of his engagement with the Greek east in particular is very clear.

The Western Empire

In the west, so important to Claudius, Nero's regime did little. The major event there was the uprising led by Boudicca in AD 60. According to Tacitus, the uprising was caused by Nero's agent's violent response to the death of Boudicca's husband, King Prasutagus (*Annals* 14.31; cf. Braund (1996) 132–146). He had grown wealthy as a ruler friendly to Rome, but died without a male heir. Tacitus says that he left a will which gave Nero a share of his estate in the hope that this would ensure the future of his family. But Nero's regime seized his whole kingdom, brutalizing his wife and daughters in the process. The emperor's abuse of wills was a favorite theme of Tacitus, the mark of a bad emperor. However, the uprising was quelled swiftly. Nero's response to a subsequent dispute between Roman officials there was to send an imperial freedman, Polyclitus, in full pomp to settle the matter. Tacitus exploits the whole affair to expatiate on the theme of freedom and its absence under Nero, implicitly contrasting an enervated Nero with the vigorous Boudicca. Cassius Dio's more exuberant account (62.1–12) has a wilder and more masculine Boudicca mock the effete Nero, whom she presents as an eastern potentate.

The rhetoric of gender and geography matters not only because it figures so prominently in our later sources, but also because it offers insight into the issues actually at stake for Nero. Although we have scant detail, it is clear enough that Nero's contemporaries could react to events in Britain in much the same way as Tacitus or Dio's Boudicca (an image probably rooted in more contemporary accounts). The uprising could be seen as a demonstration of the young emperor's inadequacies and warped priorities. In that regard, Dio's slur on Nero's eastern-style corruption would be especially damaging. After all, Nero's focus eastwards was a reality.

While Nero – and especially his adviser Seneca – takes some blame for the violent greed which sparked the uprising, he receives no credit at all for its suppression. The credit goes to the stalwart general, Suetonius Paulinus, whom Nero dishonors by placing the freedman Polyclitus over him. Moreover, we are also told that Nero considered withdrawing the Roman army from Britain. Suetonius mentions the idea without context (*Nero* 18; cf. Cappai (1992)). Possibly this was a weak response to the

uprising, but we do not know that. The hostile tradition might have been expected to exploit such an idea with more energy, so as to condemn Nero still more.

In fact the idea of withdrawal was not such a bad one in itself, so long as it was not a response to Boudicca. Any reflection on the balance of cost and benefit for Rome in Britain would encourage the idea of withdrawal. For withdrawal did not mean the abandonment of the island. Rome had managed Britain well enough in the course of a century or so before Claudius' adventure, through a network of friendly rulers. On that basis, some 20 years before the invasion of AD 43, the geographer Strabo opined that the Romans had not only reaped benefits from the island, but had actually made the island "their own" (*oikeios*: Strabo, 4.5.1–3 with Braund (1996) 80–9). To withdraw the army was not to withdraw control and power or to lose all benefits as might be gained there.

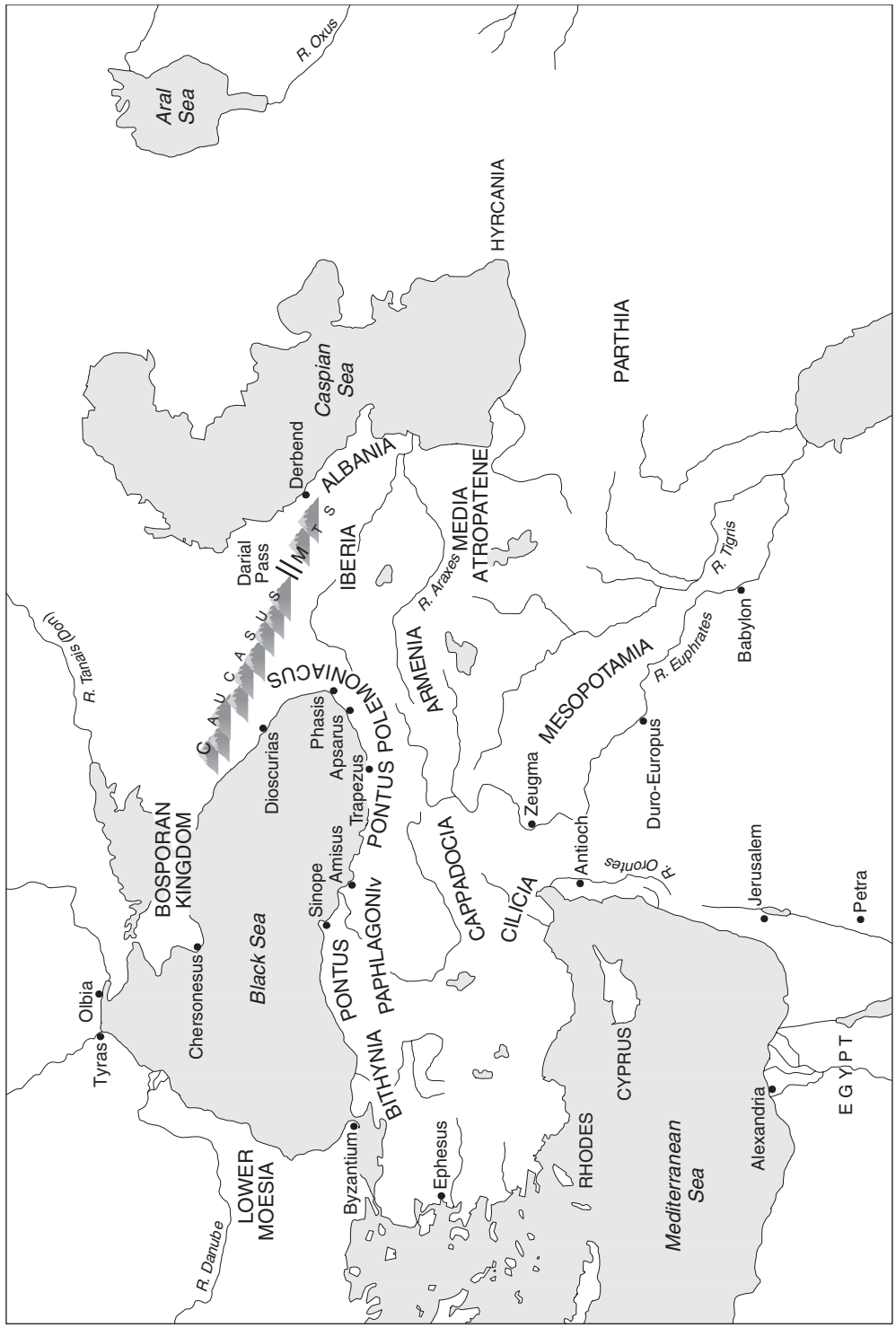
Nero, however, dropped the idea of withdrawal and left the army in place, while his commanders pushed on without great urgency into an island whose size and difficulties were becoming ever more obvious. We are told that Nero's decision was a political judgment, not a military or economic one. For, as Suetonius has it, Nero did not want the ignominy of seeming to tarnish his father's glory (*Nero* 18). Whether we accept that explanation or not, it suggests a context at the start of the reign, when the whole issue of Nero's handling of Claudius' legacy was so important. Accordingly, we have further reason to doubt that this was a response to Boudicca or indeed a sign of Nero's weakness in the face of her uprising. By that time, Nero had already killed his mother and may have felt free enough to risk seeming to dishonor his dead father.

Suetonius takes Nero's consideration of military withdrawal to indicate his lack of desire to increase the empire. Certainly Claudius had projected his invasion of Britain in exactly those terms, as the extension of empire. However, Nero's ruminations on Britain cannot really be taken to show his view on extending the empire elsewhere or in general. We shall see that Nero's flamboyant ambition conditioned his attitude towards imperialism as to all else. Nero was not averse to risk, innovation, and adventure.

Meanwhile, the Boudiccan uprising illustrates a recurrent problem with friendly rulers, as with all forms of monarchy: succession. The demise of a ruler threatened crisis. When, as often, there was no clear and unproblematic successor (preferably one male heir with good ties to Rome), it was very tempting to bring the kingdom under direct administration, unless it presented particular problems of security. Such annexation could also bring a windfall, as the wealth of the kingdom was seized. Accordingly when King Cottius died, Nero's regime simply imposed direct rule upon the little kingdom he left in the Alps (Suetonius, *Nero* 19). For, although mountain country was always a worry, there was no longer any serious threat to security there. We hear nothing of Cottius' heirs or of opposition to annexation: very possibly he had no son to claim his realm and the transition involved no real conflict.

The Eastern Empire: The Black Sea and Armenia (see Map 1)

Much more important was the imposition of direct rule upon the Black Sea kingdom of Polemo II in AD 64. (This date is inferred from Polemo's last coin, issued in 62/3: Josephus (*Bellum Judaicum* 2.366) suggests he had gone by AD 66. Cf. Barrett (1978) 443). Unlike Cottius, King Polemo seems not to have died (Suetonius, *Nero* 19 seems to indicate their different fates). It is possible that Polemo was allowed to rule the



Map 1 The eastern frontiers of the Roman empire under Nero.

principality of Olba on the southern coast of modern Turkey, which may already have been part of his realm (Barrett (1978)). The most important question, however, is why direct rule was imposed upon Polemo's kingdom in the Black Sea. If he was indeed left to rule Olba, he cannot have been at fault in any major way.

Unfortunately, our sources say little on the subject, probably because the annexation entailed no immediate conflict and was in any case far from Rome in one of the more obscure regions of the empire. Tacitus presumably dealt with it in the lost final section of his *Annals*, perhaps under the year 65: his earlier treatment of Anicetus' uprising shows his familiarity with the annexation (*Histories* 3.47). In consequence, the significance of this imperial decision has regularly been underestimated or overlooked. It is the location of the kingdom that makes it so important. Subsequently known as Polemonian Pontus, the kingdom comprised much of the southern and eastern coastlands of the Black Sea, including the important cities of Trapezus, Phasis, Dioscurias, and more. The sea itself had a fearsome reputation not only because of its storms and other natural phenomena, but also because of its piratical peoples. In particular, the Taurians, based opposite in the southern Crimea, and the less familiar peoples west of Dioscurias (Achaei, Zygi, Heniochi) were still very active: piracy and raiding were embedded in their culture and Roman domination in the region had made little difference to their ways. Polemo had a fleet to ensure security, with bases at key coastal cities, though we do not know how well it worked (de Souza (1999)). Polemo no doubt also relied on diplomacy and such arrangements as he could make with his network of neighbors, including the piratical peoples themselves. With annexation of the kingdom, Rome took over the force, which became the *classis Pontica*, and probably augmented its strength. The Roman emperor now needed to assume the diplomatic strategy which the king had hitherto handled for him locally.

Meanwhile, the kingdom also stretched inland into difficult and often mountainous country. To the south east, it bordered Armenia. In fact, Nero had even assigned a portion of Armenia to Polemo only a few years before the annexation (Tacitus, *Annals* 14.26: while Barrett (1978) 446, (1979) rightly notes that Polemo's role depends on manuscript emendation, this interpretation makes elegant sense in geographical and strategic terms). Inland from Sinope and Amisus ran an old route all the way to Issus in the north-eastern corner of the Mediterranean, while there was a more difficult transmontane passage south from Trapezus which was important to supplying Rome's eastern army (*Annals* 13.39). Inland from Phasis lay the lowland of Colchis as far as the mountains which separated it from the kingdom of Iberia. Meanwhile above this lowland stretched the main range of the Caucasus mountains, with steppelands beyond. Here Polemo, with his neighbor King Pharasmanes of Iberia, looked not only south to Armenia and the Lesser Caucasus, but also to the peoples of the northern mountains and steppe beyond. From here came the Alans, who first appear in Latin texts at this time, mentioned in passing by Lucan in association with the Caspian Gates (*Bellum Civile* 8.222–3; cf. Seneca, *Thyestes* 360; Bosworth (1977)). Viewed as a whole, Polemo's kingdom was a challenge for any ruler, though there was also wealth there, as the geographer Strabo (an associate of Polemo's mother, Queen Pythodoris) sets out in positive terms (Braund (2005)). It is easy enough to imagine that Polemo had not satisfied his Roman masters in his control of piracy at sea and banditry on land, especially as the supply-routes through and around his realm were important to the Roman military.

However, Nero may well have considered also the bigger picture in the Black Sea and Caucasus (Bennett (2006) with bibliography). Again Claudius had set the tone, for he had placed the kingdom of Thrace under direct Roman administration in AD 46, when its king had died. That extended direct Roman control to the Danube. Under Nero Roman commitment was to be extended far across the Danube along the Black Sea coast. Early in Nero's reign, in AD 56/7, the city of Tyras marked a major event in its history by establishing the beginning of a new era (Leschhorn (1993) 72–7): henceforth, this long-established Greek colony would use AD 56/7 as the first year in its modern history. The most probable reason is the city's inclusion from that year in the province of Moesia, which Rome had created out of the Thracian kingdom. As the city was very exposed to attack not only from the sea but especially from the vast hinterland above it, Roman protection was a major desideratum. It may well be that the people of Tyras had been lobbying for the change since AD 46, but it was apparently under Nero that their wish was granted. If that is right, it is very hard to avoid the inference that the decision extended also to Tyras' neighbor, Olbia (alias Borysthenes), which was very isolated to its east along the coast. We do not know whether or not Olbia also celebrated a new stage in its history, but it would have been appropriate for the city to do so. (On Olbia: Leschhorn (1993) 77; cf. Braund and Kryzhitsky (2008)).

If Nero took cognizance of these little cities on the north-west coast of the Black Sea, he was much more attentive to the business of empire than the hostile tradition encourages us to imagine. He can hardly have failed at least to notice the achievements of his governor of Moesia, Plautius Silvanus, when in about AD 61 he took his army into the south-western Crimea to raise a siege of the key city of Chersonesus (modern Sebastopol). Silvanus drove off the enemy (identified simply as the king of the Scythians) and in so doing suggested the advance of Roman commitment still further around the Black Sea coast. The notion that Rome's Moesian *provincia* by now stretched to include Olbia seems to be confirmed by the fact that Chersonesus is explicitly located "beyond Borysthenes" in the inscribed account of these events. It hardly matters whether we take this name to denote the city (Olbia alias Borysthenes) or the River Borysthenes (the modern Dnieper) to its east, as is rather more probable. Now under Nero Roman Moesia had advanced across the Danube along the coastal strip to embrace even Crimean Chersonesus within the sphere of the governor's responsibilities.

It is remarkable that the literary tradition says nothing about these matters. Perhaps the dramatic uprising of Boudicca and grander affairs in the east excluded the Crimean foray, despite the fact that Taurian Chersonesus could only evoke the significant name of Orestes (Champlin (2003c); cf. Tilg (2008)). We must further infer that Nero did not make play of what amounts to the extension of empire here. Perhaps it was not big enough for him. Indeed, the emperor Vespasian himself complains of Nero's neglect of Silvanus' achievements. For it was only under Vespasian that Silvanus was duly honored. Without his inscribed epitaph (in which Vespasian is quoted), we would know nothing of the Chersonsesus foray and would have an even hazier sense of Roman control on the north-west coast of the Black Sea (*Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae (ILS)* 986 with Conole and Milns (1983); cf. Batty (2007) 406–8).

Nero, however, could not ignore the Bosporan kingdom, which straddled the straits between Europe and Asia at the eastern end of the Crimea. Ever since the suicide of Mithridates VI in the Bosporan capital of Panticapaeum in 63 BC, the kingdom had been

the linchpin of Roman policy in the Black Sea. The rulers of the Bosporan kingdom held most of the north coast and hinterland for Rome and so shouldered an immense burden of conflict and diplomacy. They repaid Roman support (both economic and military, it seems) by extraordinary expressions of their allegiance, even as high-priests of the imperial cult (Gajdukevic (1971); cf., e.g., Batty (2007) 432). However, the instability of monarchy here, together with the enormous problems of the diverse kingdom itself, made the Bosporan kingdom a demanding friend for Rome. Claudius' Bosporan War had featured two brothers vying for the throne, Cotys and Mithridates. Although modern scholars tend to neglect this war, Tacitus saw fit to devote a several chapters of the *Annals* to it. As he tells us, it left Cotys (Rome's favorite) on the Bosporan throne, supported by Roman troops stationed in Panticapaeum.

Mithridates, Cotys' brother, became an important figure under Nero, though he usually escapes much notice. He had used the network of Bosporan diplomatic connections in the region to negotiate surrender to Claudius, who put him on show in the Forum. Tacitus tells us that Mithridates pointed out to the emperor and a gawping Roman public that he had come willingly into Roman hands. The proud king (Mithridates VIII, as he is called) made a strong and positive impression (Braund (1996) 115). He lived on, probably at Rome until AD 68, when he was a key supporter of the attempted coup of Nero's Praetorian Prefect, Nymphidius Sabinus. Galba executed him (Plutarch, *Galba* 13; 15). His prominence and association with the Prefect in AD 68, however, indicate his abiding significance under Nero. His prominence is further confirmed by his association with the elder Pliny, who found him valuable as a source of information about the complex and little understood geography of the hinterland around the Bosporan kingdom. Of course, the king knew a lot about these obscure matters and also still had his friends in the area. We can only guess at the extent of his contribution to Neronian thinking about the region, but we may be sure enough that he did make a contribution. What did he have to say about the foray to Chersonesus, for example, which brought the Roman *provincia* for the first time to the western borders of his erstwhile kingdom? And what of the annexation of Polemo's realm, which did almost the same on its fragile frontiers to the east?

Accordingly, the decision to place Polemo's kingdom under direct Roman administration in AD 64/5 was part of a larger change in Rome's general engagement with the Black Sea region. However, the date of the decision also suggests another important context, namely Nero's agreement with the Parthians over the future of Armenia. Rome had sought to control Armenia under a series of rulers, ever since Pompey's conquest there in the 60s BC (Keitel (1978)). But the Parthians had their own ambitions for the kingdom and had successfully undermined Roman attempts at indirect rule there, aided by the extent of the kingdom and the refractory tendencies of its population, as our Roman sources complain. Although Armenia lay in the uplands north of the most fractious borderlands between the two great empires, the struggle for control of the kingdom was a main focus of conflict between them.

Armenia was to be the great imperial success of Nero's reign. And, rather as Claudius had harped on his success in Britain, so Nero made the most of his achievement in Armenia. We may be sure that if Nero had enjoyed the long life predicted for him, then Armenia would have been celebrated and recalled again and again. The pattern had been set, as Tacitus suggests, before Nero's first year in power was out. For a Parthian irruption into Armenia and the flight of Rome's scheming nominee, Radamistus, seemed to mark the

start of war with Parthia. Tacitus offers a lively sketch of the anxieties at Rome about the ability of young Nero and his advisers to deal with so serious a problem (*Annals* 13.6). However, Parthian attention soon switched away from Armenia closer to home when the Parthian king found himself faced by a rival for power from within. In consequence, the Senate discussed a raft of absurdly lavish honors to mark what could be claimed as a major imperial victory. Tacitus relishes such senatorial slavishness, a favorite theme of his work.

Tacitus also takes the opportunity to report the appointment of Domitius Corbulo, whom Nero "had put in charge of retaining Armenia" (*Annals* 13.8). Tacitus and the rest of our sources are united in depicting Corbulo not only as a fine general of the old school, but also as a man of the highest moral standing. His only substantial faults, we are told, were glory-hunting and loyalty to an emperor who did not deserve it. As Parthian Tiridates is said to have remarked, Corbulo was "a good slave" (Geiser (2007)). All our sources agree that Corbulo was the man responsible for the eastern successes of which Nero made so much. Although the Parthians might be considered Rome's greatest enemy, the two empires had established a *modus vivendi* which avoided direct conflict for the most part. Ever since the reign of Augustus, Parthian kings had sent sons and relations to Rome. While Romans saw them as a sign of submission, Parthians no doubt took a rather different view (Braund (1984) 9–21; Allen (2006)).

However, the success was very flimsy. There had been no adequate arrangement in Armenia and at the start of AD 58 there was a real threat of war. We know little of the immediate background. King Vologaeses had bestowed Armenia upon his brother Tiridates, but Rome was not ready to give it up. There were Armenians, we are told, who preferred Rome, but most wanted Parthia. Geography, intermarriage and kindred culture all made Parthia the more suitable power in Armenia, as even Tacitus acknowledges (*Annals* 13.34). Even so Corbulo, still in the east and charged with keeping Armenia for Rome, went on the offensive, having enlisted new recruits in Galatia and Cappadocia and having received a well-tried legion and auxiliaries from Germany. Meanwhile, Tiridates, with Armenian troops and Parthian forces from Vologaeses, harried Roman positions. At the same time, Corbulo applied pressure from north and south through Rome's royal allies, Pharasmanes of Iberia and Antiochus IV of Commagene.

Tiridates protested that Rome was breaking the arrangement of AD 54 and threatened that Parthia would go to war in earnest. Corbulo maintained pressure, urging Tiridates to seek a solution in submission to Rome – a hint of what was to come. Tacitus states that Corbulo knew that the Parthians were committed to dealing with an uprising in Hyrcania (*Annals* 13.37). After an abortive attempt at talks, Corbulo stormed three Armenian strongholds in a single day, slaughtering their inhabitants or selling them into slavery. In panic others rushed to surrender and Corbulo proceeded to Artaxata, the capital, which promptly opened its gates to him. Corbulo spared the inhabitants but destroyed the city's defensive walls which were dangerously substantial. Tiridates had shown himself briefly, but his harrying tactics failed to distract or divert Corbulo's disciplined forces and he left the area.

Nero celebrated over Armenia for a second time, more justly and more exuberantly than before. He was hailed *imperator*: Corbulo was the general, but Nero was the supreme commander and victor. Thanksgivings, monuments, and public holidays were voted in the Senate, and though much remains unclear, the opening of the Temple of Janus featured somehow in Nero's various celebrations of "peace" (cf. Syme (1979);

Townend (1980)). This was the first major military achievement of the young emperor's regime. It is also the first time we find in our sources an indication of an attempt to explain and express his Armenian successes in solar terms, all the more appropriate insofar as Nero was – like Apollo – both musician and warrior. The fall of Artaxata was divine will, it was said, signaled by a strange darkness that had settled over the city, set about with lightning, while the lands outside the walls were bathed in sunshine (*Annals* 13.41).

Tigranocerta soon opened its gates. Corbulo had made himself master of Armenia, after minimal fighting: his Iberian allies had been especially useful (*Annals* 14.23). Tiridates had been unable to oppose him and had been forced into Media Atropatene, which was ruled by his brother, Pacorus. For the Parthian priority continued to be the Hyrcanians, in their mountain country by the Caspian Sea: the Parthians could not yet commit forces to Armenia. As often, diplomacy was important behind the scenes. Nero received a delegation from Hyrcania, apparently seeking alliance. Having made the long journey to Rome, they returned through Iberia, it seems, with an escort ordered by Corbulo and presumably with encouraging sentiments, though Rome was hardly ready yet to commit forces in Hyrcania (*Annals* 14.25).

In the hope of clinching control of Armenia for the longer term, Nero sent a new king to rule there in AD 60. This was Tigranes, whose name was redolent of Armenia, but whose connections with his new kingdom were otherwise nugatory as far as we know. Nero probably knew him well and we may infer from his appointment that Nero held him in some regard. For Tigranes had spent many years in residence at Rome, one of a collection of royals there, recently augmented by the latest Parthian arrivals. Tacitus often shows distaste for the kings who became part of the imperial regime and characteristically complains that Tigranes had learned servile ways in the imperial capital (*Annals* 14.26; cf. 15.1). In any case we should not expect Tacitus to favor a crony of Nero (Gowing (1990) esp. 322). And Tigranes did not last long on the throne which Nero had given him, despite a substantial Roman force with which the emperor provided him and despite the assignment of his marchlands to neighboring rulers, who were thereby also rewarded for their part in the Armenian success. Among these rulers, as we have seen, was probably Polemo II, through whose kingdom supplies had been conveyed to the Armenian front from the Black Sea.

Under this new arrangement in Armenia, from about AD 60 Corbulo was redeployed to Syria, replacing the deceased Ummidius Quadratus. He had not abandoned Tigranes, of course, but kept a watching brief. However, it was Tigranes himself, we are told, who precipitated the war with Parthia which was to lose him his throne. For Tigranes sought to seize territory from Parthian control. That, on top of the loss of Armenia, threatened to undermine Parthian claims to imperial power, so that Vologaeses was forced to action, apparently against his first instincts. Hyrcania had to be set aside as the Parthians prepared to take back Armenia for Tiridates. Tacitus tells us that Vologaeses publicly bestowed the royal diadem on his brother, symbolizing his ability to bestow Armenia itself (*Annals* 15.1–2). Corbulo was soon informed of Parthian movements, but he did not know where an attack would come, so he sent two legions to Armenia and defended Syria as best he could.

In fact, the Parthians struck at Tigranocerta, which was successfully defended by Tigranes and Roman forces based there. Corbulo had left its walls intact and the Parthians lacked Roman prowess in siegecraft. Accordingly, when Corbulo followed

up by threatening Vologaeses with invasion across the Euphrates, the Parthian king demurred, called off his troops and sought a diplomatic solution with an embassy to Nero (*Annals* 15.5). In this way, for a third time, Nero's regime could boast success in Armenia. But this time, more was wanted. Rome itself might even remove Tigranes and impose direct Roman control. At Corbulo's own suggestion, a new general was sent specifically to handle war in Armenia, but the man was not to Corbulo's liking. The new commander, Caesennius Paetus, sought to play down Corbulo's achievements, apparently on the grounds that his victories in Armenia had been gained so tamely.

Vologaeses' emissaries returned from Nero with nothing to satisfy the Parthians. Presumably the emperor felt himself in a very strong position, with no need to compromise. However, Paetus' more aggressive strategy in Armenia soon changed all that. The Parthians threw a large army at him and soon forced the surrender and ignominious withdrawal of all Roman forces from Armenia. Corbulo blamed Paetus, as does Tacitus (*Annals* 15.7–16). Nero himself escapes direct criticism, but Paetus was his appointee and it was Nero who had recently rejected Parthian diplomacy. Corbulo insisted that he would now wait for orders from the emperor, who is said to have seriously considered personal participation in the expedition (Dio 62.22.4). In the end Corbulo managed to negotiate an agreement with Vologaeses. The Parthians withdrew from Armenia, leaving Tiridates in place, while Corbulo abandoned the positions he had recently established across the Euphrates. Meanwhile, the erection of the trophies and arches decreed by the Senate to mark Corbulo's earlier victory over the Parthians continued on the Capitol at the centre of the Roman imperial state.

Nero and his advisers decided on war. Corbulo was given extraordinary powers of command to recover Armenia. As he began to take retribution against Parthian-friendly Armenians, however, Corbulo also pursued active diplomacy with Vologaeses through centurion intermediaries (on whom Kennedy (1983) 188). In consequence Corbulo and Tiridates met in person at the site of Paetus' abandoned Armenian camp at Rhandeia (Dio 62.23.1). An agreement was reached which would settle affairs in Armenia for a generation and wreathe both Corbulo and Nero in glory. According to Tacitus, a key factor in the success of this diplomacy was Corbulo's personal standing with the Parthians, who admired and respected him. It is easy to find a contrast here with their view of Nero, which Tacitus leaves us to imagine for ourselves. However, throughout Nero's reign, the Parthians had shown no strong desire to go to war with Rome. As Corbulo knew, Vologaeses had enough fighting to do elsewhere in his empire, where the Hyrcanians were evidently only one of his problems.

The settlement was by no means a bad one for the Parthians. Their defeat of Paetus allowed them to claim victory without facing further war with Corbulo, while Tiridates was indeed to have the Armenian throne. Armenia was now to be ruled by a Parthian king, Vologaeses' brother. Meanwhile, Rome too could claim victory. Although Corbulo had never taken on the full might of the Parthians, he had done enough, militarily and diplomatically, to seem to have beaten them and then faced them down. From the Roman perspective, King Tiridates subsequently showed enough respect for the emperor Nero to be considered his vassal, though it is wholly unclear how the Parthian side, and Tiridates himself, interpreted these gestures.

Tacitus gives the strong impression that, from at least the start of Nero's reign, a key issue for both sides had been by whose hands – Nero's or Vologaeses' – the throne

of Armenia should be bestowed (*Annals* 13.34). That may very well be so. We may wonder nonetheless how much that is retrojection from Rome's main claim to victory, namely that Parthian Tiridates would receive his kingdom from Nero. Certainly Rome had traditionally made much of the bestowal of kingdoms, but it is much less clear that Parthia viewed the matter in quite the same way, despite Tacitus' imaginative picture of Vologaeses' earlier bestowal of Armenia upon Tiridates. In any case, whatever ceremony might occur in Rome, was it not also Vologaeses who had given the kingdom of Armenia to Tiridates, both by his personal gift and by force of Parthian arms there? According to Cassius Dio, Vologaeses saw the whole affair as part of the larger diplomatic relationship with Rome: he considered that he had conferred a great benefit upon Nero (Dio 62.21.3), a favor he could call in one day. And Armenia would be in Parthian hands.

The great event began with Tiridates setting down his royal diadem before the image of Nero, which was placed on a curule chair on a tribunal amid much military and ritual ceremony. It was to be taken up again only from the hand of Nero in person. According to Tacitus, he announced to Corbulo and others present that he would make the journey to Rome and give the emperor a new honor – an Arsacid suppliant. At the same time, however, he held forth at length on the nobility of his Arsacid blood and made it clear that he would be a suppliant of a rather peculiar kind, for he stressed that the Arsacids were by no means in difficulties. Even so, Tacitus reports Roman feeling that he was little more than a captive, on display to the world. We may recall Mithridates VIII in book 12 of the *Annals* (Braund (1996) esp. 115). However, Tacitus dismisses the various privileges granted to Tiridates (including retention of his sword and equality of status with the consuls at Rome) as superficial fripperies which were easily granted by the Romans who were rather interested in the realities of power (*Annals* 15.31). For Tacitus, as for our other Roman sources, there is no doubt that this was a major victory in Armenia. We may wonder what Tiridates wrote in the letter he now sent ahead to Nero as he prepared for the long journey.

The arrangement agreed with Tiridates at Rhandeia was indeed something new and important. No emperor had ever bestowed Armenia upon the brother of the Parthian king. Nero made much of that very novelty, we may be sure. However, there were precedents of a sort. Nero was by no means the first Roman emperor to bestow a kingdom, nor even the first to do so in a grand ceremony in the Forum at Rome. Claudius had done so, for example, in bestowing his Judaean kingdom upon Agrippa I (Suetonius, *Claudius* 25 with Braund (1984) esp. 27). Naturally, the flamboyant Nero could exploit the greater evocations and significance of Armenia and Parthia to make his own bestowal of a kingdom the greatest show ever seen in the imperial capital, but there had been shows of a similar kind before. Nor was it so unusual for Parthian royals, Arsacids like Tiridates, to come to Rome and to make a splash with their arrival. They had come under Augustus, for example, when he too had claimed a great (and similarly bloodless) victory after the Parthians agreed to return Crassus' standards in 20 BC (Zanker (1989)). As Nero will have pointed out, however, the brother of the ruling king of Parthia was something very special.

Tiridates did not travel alone, nor quietly. There was, of course, a Roman escort, led by Annius Vinicianus, Corbulo's ill-fated son-in-law (Dio 62.23.6). There was also a Parthian escort of a thousand cavalry, we are told. Our principal source, Cassius Dio, presents a sumptuous image of this grand procession all the way to Italy from

the Euphrates. Even if Dio is guilty of a little hyperbole, he has surely captured the profound impression made by Tiridates and his great entourage. No doubt the Parthian prince wanted to inspire the peoples of the Roman empire with the grandeur and might of his own empire. The grand procession moved at a stately pace: it was some nine months on the road before it finally reached Nero. This was a cavalcade of Parthian royalty, for besides Tiridates himself there were also his sons and the sons of Vologaeses, Pacorus, and Monobazus, ruler of Adiabene. Tiridates travelled the whole way to Italy on horseback, while his wife rode beside him wearing a golden helmet which covered her face, as tradition prescribed. They seem to have crossed the sea only at the Bosporus and were received with awe and admiration by the communities they passed on their long journey across the eastern empire. Presumably their provisioning was also a burden on those communities, though we are not told how this was managed. Having entered Italy by land from Illyricum and through Picenum, Tiridates evidently avoided Rome (on imperial instruction no doubt) and met Nero first at Naples, where the king played his part by doing obeisance to the emperor. Later, Tiridates also confirmed his martial credentials by displaying his remarkable archery at a spectacular show over several days in the amphitheater of nearby Puteoli. Tiridates had come as a suppliant, but also as a warrior. He retained his sword, albeit apparently nailed inside its scabbard.

From the Bay of Naples they proceeded together up to Rome, where the grand spectacle was staged in the Forum, with all Rome either taking part or looking on in wonder. This was by far the greatest show that Nero had ever put on. Like his image at Rhandeia, Nero was sat on high, resplendent on his curule chair. Tiridates and his immediate companions once more did obeisance, at which the onlookers sent up a deafening roar of approval. We are told that he now made a short speech, making clear his subjection, to which Nero responded by affirming his ability to give or take away kingdoms. Nero was now giving Armenia to Tiridates, who had received it neither from his father nor from his brother, but from the Roman emperor. Some no doubt remembered what was said and a public record may well have been made, so that the words we have are probably more than fiction (Dio 63.5.2–3). At Nero's instruction, Tiridates went up before him and, down at his feet, received the diadem from the emperor's hand. As Nero placed the diadem on Tiridates' head, there was again much shouting. Celebrations continued in the theater, gleaming in gold and purple, and with a banquet. Nero himself performed both with the lyre and in a chariot. Over the theater a great purple awning displayed a golden image of Nero in a chariot with stars around him. For Nero was indeed Apolline, the master of lyre, chariot, and warfare, too. From sunrise, this had been a "golden day," a fulfillment of the promise of his accession, when Apollo himself was said to have prophesied a golden future for the emperor. Meanwhile, when Tiridates' short speech somehow compared Nero with Mithras, a sun deity, he again played his part in the pageant of gold. Before the great ceremony, Nero had probably explained to Tiridates not only how the event would proceed but also his big ideas about the theme and meaning of it all. Tiridates had every reason to play along as far as his dignity would allow (for more on this ceremony see Mratschek in this volume).

The emperor and the king seem to have developed a good personal relationship. It has been suggested that Nero was captivated by Tiridates (Champlin (2003a) 226–7). He gave the king expensive presents and also allowed him to rebuild Artaxata with its fine defensive walls, which Corbulo had destroyed. He also provided craftsmen, including

probably military engineers, and allowed the king to recruit others for himself, though Corbulo deprived him of the latter on his way home. Tiridates returned in relative haste: he had made the impression he wanted and took ship from Brundisium. Having rebuilt Artaxata, he named it Neronia in the emperor's honor.

There is a tradition that afterwards Nero repeatedly summoned Vologaeses to Rome, but the Parthian king was not a Tiridates. We are told that he eventually suggested to Nero that they should meet half way, in Asia, but the meeting never took place (Dio 63.7.2). The story may have some substance, for Nero might well wish to bring Vologaeses himself to Rome and exceed even the glory that he claimed from bringing Tiridates. However, the story also suited Nero's detractors, for it took some of the shine off Nero's golden day with Tiridates. Be that as it may, Nero's relations with Parthia remained broadly stable and cordial. Vologaeses himself is said to have urged the Senate to honor Nero's memory, evidently while seeking to confirm the arrangements of Rhandeia after the emperor's demise (Suetonius, *Nero* 57).

Plans in Ethiopia and the Caucasus

An indication of this new stability was Nero's interest in campaigns elsewhere, to the Caspian Gates and possibly also to Ethiopia. It is unclear how far such ideas had developed before the end of AD 66 when he set off on his tour of Greece, where a sour tradition contrasts his antics with the conquests of the Republic and the sober visit of Augustus. His critics, always seeking to contrast his priorities with traditional warfare, observed that his "expedition" to Greece was large enough to conquer the Parthians and more besides (Dio 63.8.1–4). However, Nero's notion of campaigns to north and south was more than passing fancy. Cassius Dio states that he sent scouts to both regions, but when the amount of time and trouble needed for their conquest was reported Nero preferred to wait for them to come over to him of their own accord (63.8.1). In other words, the emperor preferred diplomacy.

We happen to know a little about the nature of Nero's diplomacy in Ethiopia, for Seneca himself writes that he heard two centurions reporting on their journey to the king of Ethiopia and beyond. In fact, they visited Nubia, not highland Ethiopia (the kingdom of Aksum), for they seem to have penetrated no further than the Sudd section of the Nile in the modern Sudan. When the party reached Meroe, far up the Nile, its king was evidently helpful and compliant. Seneca says that Nero ("the greatest lover of truth, as of all the virtues") had sent them to investigate the source of the Nile (*Natural Questions* 6.8.3; cf. Hine (2006); Williams (2008); Doody in this volume. More generally on the region: Kirwan (1957); Jackson (2002)). Their mission was prompted by more than geographical curiosity, for all the evident contemporary interest in the Nile and its origins. The centurions were Praetorians, led by a tribune, according to the elder Pliny, who acknowledges the scientific value of the mission but also makes clear that it was part of Nero's planning for war (*Natural History* 6.181–4).

Such planning may have gone beyond exploration and diplomacy. Nero had sent units of the German army by sea to Alexandria but then shipped them back to Rome again. (Tacitus, *Histories* 1.32). We do not know, however, whether these troops were meant for a campaign to the south. The show for Tiridates at Puteoli had featured a whole day

of Ethiopians, which looks like a celebration of the centurions' successful mission, which had returned not long before.

The attractions of Ethiopia for Nero were numerous and for the young emperor Augustus' example was always important. Indeed, Pliny's account encourages the idea that Nero looked to Petronius' expedition, launched under Augustus. Further, Nero may also have been aware that his grandfather Germanicus, on his own grand visit to Egypt, had been shown a source of the Nile which was no such thing (Tacitus, *Annals* 2.61). Meanwhile, the strong association between the Ethiopians and the sun would also have attracted the interest of the Apolline emperor (MacLachlan (1992)). In any event, Nero's fascination with Alexandria is clear enough: preparations were made for his expected visit there. Would the emperor use the visit to go up the Nile in arms? We should recall his desire to participate in Corbulo's final expedition into Armenia. At the same time, we may suspect also an element of Alexander-imitation in Nero's thinking about Egypt and Ethiopia. Lucan shows the contemporary notion that Alexander too had sent a military mission to find the source of the Nile, while Julius Caesar is presented as especially hungry for knowledge of the river's origins (*Bellum Civile* 10.272–5; Gardner (1977)). An Ethiopian campaign could recall Caesar, Augustus, and Germanicus, as well as Alexander and Apollo himself. However, Nero cancelled the visit to Egypt and probably abandoned the notion of a campaign up the Nile. His centurions' mission was success enough.

The idea of an expedition to the Caspian Gates also had strong associations with Alexander, though it had little else in common with the Ethiopian project (Anderson (1928); cf. Bosworth (1983); on Alexander and Armenia, Hammond (1996)). In this case the scheme was not abandoned, despite Dio's claims, for Nero seems simply to have run out of time. He was still a young man, hardly 30, when Vindex and Galba shattered his expectations of a lengthy reign for decades to come. The expedition to the Caspian Gates was directed at the Darial Pass on the northern frontier of the friendly kingdom of Iberia. The elder Pliny makes this clear, distinguishing this pass from the two other passes also called "the Caspian Gates," which lay closer to the Caspian Sea on its west and south and further away from the Roman empire (*Natural History* 6.40; cf. Braund (1994)). In all three cases the name evoked Alexander, who had only visited the pass south of the Caspian, the least striking of the three. However, Corbulo had applied the term to the Darial Pass, so we may understand why Nero did the same and so had thoughts of Alexander.

The emperor created a new legion for the campaign, *legio I Italica*, which he called the "phalanx of Alexander the Great." Exceptionally, its recruits were all drawn from Italy and were all six-footers (Suetonius, *Nero* 19.2). Detachments were also sent east from the armies of Britain, Germany, and Illyricum (Tacitus, *Histories* 1.6). The elder Pliny complained that the Darial Pass should properly be called not the Caspian Gates but the Caucasian Gates. He completed his *Natural History* in AD 77 when Nero was safely dead and he may have been supported in his usage by the regime of Vespasian, whose engineers had completed fortifications for the Iberian king in AD 75 where the main road from the Darial Pass came down to the Iberian capital at Harmozica (modern Mtskheta). But the scholarship of Pliny was not to the liking of the rulers of Iberia, who preferred to claim the Darial Pass as the Caspian Gates even so, no doubt attracted by their fame and their evocations of Alexander. As with the Ethiopian campaign, plans had been serious enough to show significant preparation among the military. The activities of Vespasian's engineers

there further confirm a serious military interest: it is just possible that Roman engineers had been sent there first by Nero, who had given engineers to Tiridates. Be that as it may, Corbulo's dealings with Iberia and Iberians suggest that there was no need for a special Neronian scouting mission to the Darial Pass. Information came from Corbulo and perhaps also the Iberian king, Pharasmanes, while in Rome the deposed Bosporan king, Mithridates VIII, may well have had something to say, for he knew the Sarmatians.

The projected expedition was entirely coherent as part of Nero's arrangements in the region. The annexation of Polemo's kingdom in 64/5 coincided with the agreement reached at Rhandeia. Polemo's removal had taken Roman direct administration to the eastern marchlands of Colchis, where lay the kingdom of Iberia. All Iberia's kings had a strong interest in Armenia. Meanwhile, the Sarmatian peoples north of the Darial Pass were a major concern of the Iberian king, who was expected to control them. He could be blamed for their incursions through Iberia into Armenia and beyond. And it is clear enough that something had changed. A new name for these Sarmatians now appears in our sources. These are the Alans, linked with the Caspian Gates by Lucan (*Bellum Civile* 8.222–3) and probably named by Tacitus as the target of Nero's expedition, while Pliny writes simply (and perhaps disparagingly) of Nero's threatening of "the Sarmatians" (*Natural History* 1.6; cf. Chilver (1979) 55–6; but note he confuses the Caucasus' passes).

Tiridates may well have encouraged Nero's project. Armenia had suffered before from incursions from north of the Caucasus (e.g. Tacitus, *Annals* 6.33). Indeed, an incursion from the north was soon almost to cost Tiridates his life: he had to cut himself free from the lasso of a Sarmatian raider. In reaction Vologaeses himself urged the emperor Vespasian to join with him in taking action (Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum* 7.244–51; Suetonius, *Domitian* 2.2). Meanwhile, there seems to have been a change on the throne of Iberia in these years: Pharasmanes was replaced by a King Mithridates. That too demanded Roman attention. Clearly the projected expedition was both rational and appropriately glamorous for the flamboyant emperor. If Alexander could not be emulated in Egypt, he could be evoked in the Caucasus. However, Nero's death put an end to the matter, though under the Flavians too a Roman army could be imagined at the Caspian Gates (Statius, *Silvae* 4.4.63–4, albeit hyperbolically).

Finally, there was also change in the Bosporan kingdom, where King Cotys seems to have died late in Nero's reign. Our scant knowledge derives primarily from the kingdom's coinage, but great caution is required in making inferences from the absence of coinage or the choice of designs. The only detail we know for sure is that a new king, Rhescuporis, was on the Bosporan throne around the time of Nero's death. He was Cotys' son, which encourages the impression of untroubled succession (cf. *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* (*SEG*) 19.504 with Conole and Milns (1983) 190 n. 4). The silence of our sources is very noisy. If, as has been imagined, Nero had set about taking over the Bosporan kingdom, it is inconceivable that none of our sources would have alluded to the matter. A change in the Bosporus would have been far more important than the plans about which we are told, in the Caucasus and in Ethiopia. Meanwhile, at Rome the man most interested in these shadowy events was the dead king's brother, Mithridates VIII. There is no reason to suppose that he had abandoned his claim to the Bosporan throne. We may wonder whether it was the hope of realizing his old ambitions there that caused him to support Nymphidius Sabinus' attempt to succeed Nero.

Conclusions

Despite the hostile tradition's focus on his supposed unmilitary bent, Nero's record in foreign affairs was in fact excellent. And he made the most of it. His great success was Armenia, which was also a very positive development in relations with Parthia more generally. Soon the Parthians would look to Rome for help against the Alans (Suetonius, *Domitian* 2.2; cf. Dio 66.11.3), while the Roman poet Statius would offer a sympathetic picture of the difficulties of a new Parthian king (Hollis 1994)). The Black Sea had been brought under much tighter control, especially to its north west and south east. For Nero's Rome had extended, beyond Claudius' recent creation of the province of Moesia, to take up new responsibilities around the coast, past Tyras and Olbia as far as Chersonesus. A change of king in the Crimean Bosporus, under circumstances unknown to us, was managed quietly. As Josephus has Agrippa II assert, arguing against Jewish revolt in AD 66, the famously difficult Black Sea was under Roman control and with minimal military commitment (*Bellum Judaicum* 2.366), for the annexation of Polemo's kingdom in 64/5 had extended direct Roman administration from the eastern marchlands of the Bosporan kingdom through Caucasian Colchis and around the coast to Trapezus and beyond. The Black Sea had been made a Roman lake, patrolled by a Roman fleet. Meanwhile, in the southern Caucasus, Armenia was now in the friendly hands of Tiridates, as part of a new rapprochement between Nero's Rome and Vologaeses' Parthia. The annexation of Polemo's kingdom and the contemporary settlement in neighboring Armenia are to be understood as part of the same vision for control and stability across the north-eastern empire. The planned expedition to the Darial Pass was not merely a flight of flamboyant Neronian fancy, but a considered endeavor better to secure the region from the Sarmatians of the north. Subsequent Flavian concern with the same issue confirms as much. If Nero had not died in AD 68, the expedition would have gone ahead. Indeed, the emperor may have participated in person, as he had wished earlier in Armenia. By contrast, "Ethiopia" had shown sufficient difficulty and also sufficient compliance to escape serious Roman intervention. The return of the centurions was enough to allow Nero to boast a victory of sorts there, duly celebrated before Tiridates at Puteoli.

Throughout, the focus of Nero's regime was very much on the Greek east. There is little sign of imperial interest in the western empire and little seems to have happened there to demand attention. The annexation of the Cottian Alps hardly registered. Certainly, the Boudiccan revolt had been a disaster, but a fleeting and distant one, crushed quickly enough. The philhellenism and the "eastern style" of which Dio's Boudicca complains were well matched with the demands of Roman foreign affairs in his reign. The overwhelmingly hostile tradition on Nero has obliterated this excellent record in foreign affairs with images of his dissolute play-acting, charioteering, and partying. No doubt the dramatic aspects of dealing with exotic kings appealed to Nero at least as much as it had appealed to his predecessors and perhaps more. Similarly, he may have been attracted by the "frivolous" aspects of empire, but he was by no means the first Roman to emulate or imitate Alexander the Great. While the tradition places credit not with Nero but with others (especially Corbulo), the fact remains that Nero was in charge, albeit with advisers around him. It was Nero who appointed Corbulo in

Armenia. It was Nero who received Tiridates and formed the good relationship with him that underpinned his agreement with the Parthians over Armenia and the eastern frontier in general. It was Nero who sent the mission to Ethiopia before launching a campaign there. Moreover, he seems to have had a desire to go to the frontline on at least one occasion and probably more.

Ultimately, the key point is that there was no necessary contradiction between Nero's much-condemned lifestyle and the successful pursuit of Rome's imperial goals. Nero may have had little taste for the nitty-gritty of Roman government, as our sources imply, but that was not required in heading the imperial system. As with other emperors, it is largely unclear how far Nero personally directed policy. But the fact that the foreign affairs of Nero's reign are so firmly fixed in the Greek east may well be a consequence not only of the turn of events, but also of the emperor's personal priorities and interests. In any event, examination of the evidence shatters the familiar image of Nero as an unmilitary emperor, unconcerned with the frontier. Like Apollo and like other emperors, he was concerned not only with culture but also with war.

FURTHER READING

Nero's military activities have received much less attention than most other aspects of his reign. Among the biographies, Griffin's is the most useful for this topic, while Champlin's is excellent on Tiridates in Rome and his relationship with Nero. The *Cambridge Ancient History* touches on most of these matters, in differing depth: the first edition remains useful. Nero's eastern concerns are well treated by the still very useful Sanford (1937). Among more recent studies, note especially Isaac (1992) and Heil (1997). On Tacitus' views, see, e.g., Vervaet (2002). On Parthia, Wiesehöfer (1998). For the Caucasus, Braund (1994). For the Danube, Batty (2007). For Ethiopia, Jackson (2002), with Williams (2008) on the Nile and Seneca. For Britain, Braund (1996), especially chapter 8, with further bibliography. On the mysterious amber route and Senecan involvement in foreign affairs, Hine (2006).

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CHAPTER 6

Domus Neroniana: The Imperial Household in the Age of Nero

Michael J. Mordine

The imperial household was many things: a physical space, a patrilineal social unit, a political apparatus, a component of the imperial ideology of power. In each of these aspects this pre-eminent household served as a central and centripetal force in constituting the nature and identity of the Roman empire. Both an idea and an institution, the imperial household emerged from antecedents in the Republican past and solidified itself as a vital instrument of the imperial system during the reign of the Julio-Claudians, the first imperial dynasty in Rome. Beginning with Augustus and ending with Nero, the reign of the Julio-Claudians was the period during which the imperial household came into being and began the process of evolving into the shape and identity it possessed in the High Empire. It was a project that was still incomplete by the time of Nero's death.

The story of Nero's court, of the imperial household and family during his reign, is both a tragedy and a farce – at least, that is, according to our main sources which are prevailingly hostile to the man and his regime, a hostility which is perhaps nowhere as evident as in their treatment of this very topic (see Hurley in this volume). Tacitus, Suetonius, and Dio are the three major, and problematic, sources for Nero's reign, all of whom wrote within a tradition of moralizing historical and biographical narratives, often privileging the sordid and the bizarre. The inherent biases of such moralizing accounts inevitably color our understanding of Nero, generally, and of the imperial household, in particular, which existed and operated in good part behind closed doors. For these authors, Nero's aberrant behavior flourishes in the dysfunctional workings of the imperial household as the center of the newly established political system. As the last of this dynasty, Nero becomes the teleological culmination, one might say the distillation of the failings and excesses, of his predecessors in both their personal and public lives (two areas which, of course, cannot really be separated in an autocratic figure). Thus, Nero comes to play the role of moral and political counterexample, the antithesis both of

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Augustus the founder and of those emperors who followed Nero. Nevertheless, we must remember that Tacitus and Suetonius (himself an imperial secretary under Hadrian) had access to imperial records and other materials lost to us. Tacitus makes clear, for example, that he had read the memoirs of Nero's mother, Agrippina, a work which was doubtless self-serving, but, if Agrippina was anything like the woman presented in his *Annals*, it must have been quite a document (*Annals* 4.53).

Like other components of the new political and social system which emerged under Augustus and his successors in the first century AD, the imperial household was a product of experimentation and innovation, of trial and error, but also, perhaps most importantly, of the incorporation and adaptation of longstanding forms of Roman political and social organization. Thus, it was fully in keeping with Augustus' strategy of at least nominally working within traditional social and political forms to define and exercise the new and unprecedented reality of his autocratic power. The imperial household, in particular, was constituted by and modeled on the hierarchical structures of household organization and personal relationships habitual to the traditional makeup of the noble houses of Republican Rome. These structures served as the basis of the more formal though not fully institutionalized components of the imperial service, and the ambiguities of position and status in the early imperial court were due in part to this Republican origin, since the court developed out of a social rather than a political institution. In addition, the emperor became linked in the Roman mind to the position of the *paterfamilias*, the male head of any Roman household, who like the emperor could, at least theoretically, exercise unlimited control over his purview under the principle of *patria potestas*. Indeed, Augustus accepted the honorific *pater patriae* ("father of the country") which came to be a conventional imperial title (this is the one title that the young Nero declined at the start of his reign, although he took it up later). It was thus natural if not inevitable that the emperor would occupy the place of the head of the Roman household in the Roman imagination. In short, the imperial court was private in origin but public in function.

Indeed, the nature and scope of the very concepts of public and private were played out and writ large in the imperial household, a continuation of a conceptual project which was a central concern of the Augustan Age. That age saw the development and articulation of a new relationship between public and private necessitated by the new political realities. From the beginning of Augustus' reign the Julio-Claudian household was represented as the ideal household, the embodiment of the Roman household generally, and a synecdoche of Rome itself. As such, the imperial household was an effective ideological instrument in the strengthening of the imperial system – that is, of the rule of the empire by a single household. The character of Nero's household developed in the shadow of this history and should be understood as a reflection, a response and, to a large degree, a challenge to this Augustan domestic philosophy which had provided an ideological basis for the imperial system with the household at its center. Much of Nero's behavior, if we look beyond traditional narratives of madness and moral corruption, can usefully be seen as an expression of an incipient, yet abortive, countercultural project, part of the agenda of which, deliberate or otherwise, was rewriting the Augustan model and redefining the conception of the Roman house and household, the *domus*.

It has been argued that the imperial household did not emerge as a stable institution of the Roman state until the accession of Tiberius, and, in fact, the term *domus Augusta* is found only at the end of Augustus' rule and so may have served specific ideological

purposes in supporting the regime at that particular historical moment. While we should not put too much weight on the absence of that term from our earlier sources, it is clear that the *domus Augusta* was the result of a long formative process which was not completed even by the reign of Nero, and, indeed, like all such institutions, it was subject to continual changes and modifications. Nevertheless, the recognition of the imperial court as a court, the locus of autocratic power akin to Hellenistic and eastern monarchies, quickly took hold in the early imperial period, particularly in reference to Nero's rule. Nero was a consummate Hellenophile, and, more than any of his predecessors, he consciously emulated Greek customs and attitudes, including the adoption of some monarchical trappings in the style of Hellenistic courts. Indeed, the use of *aula*, the Romanized Greek term for a royal court, to describe the imperial household, in addition to the Latin *domus* with its more Republican associations, becomes established by Nero's reign, appearing particularly in the writings of his sometime advisor Seneca (e.g., *De Ira* 2.33.2). The terms encompass not just the physical center of imperial power, but also the nature of that power, the personnel who exercised that power, and the potentially dangerous consequences of proximity to that power.

The actual administrative makeup of the imperial household exhibits a number of important features, particularly in the development of an increasingly stratified and bureaucratized corps of household servants, both slaves and freedmen, performing a full range of administrative tasks. The household of the emperor, as had been the case with powerful Republican elites, was a complex social, economic, and administrative institution, but unfortunately our evidence for the details of the imperial administration and its members is relatively scanty, since, except for the most important positions, ancient historians were simply uninterested in the functionaries of the imperial bureaucracy. Some scattered information about members of the imperial household can be collected from inscriptions, particularly epitaphs where status and function in the imperial household were proudly displayed. A certain Eumenes, for example, set up a tombstone for his "brother" Indus proclaiming that he had been one of Nero's bodyguards (*L'Année Epigraphique*, 1952, 148). While the details of the imperial household under Nero are largely lacking, the household staff of Augustus' wife Livia has been more fully reconstructed and can serve as a comparandum for the complexity and variety of subsequent imperial households. Attested in her household is a full panoply of functionaries: administrators, attendants, domestics, entertainers, workers of all sorts and their assistants from accountants to goldsmiths. One can be sure that the imperial household itself was on a far larger and more complex scale, employing literally thousands of members working throughout the empire in the service of the political and economic interests of the emperor.

Nevertheless, it is clear that three broad categories of top imperial advisors emerged, predicated upon class distinctions. There were the freedmen functionaries, the equestrian "friends of the *princeps*" (*amici principis*), and select members of the senatorial elite who served as intimate advisors and political allies. Members of any of these groups exercised great influence and often acquired enormous wealth and prestige through the opportunities offered by their association with the emperor and the power of their position. To these should be added, particularly in the case of Nero, those figures who were influential due to their family ties and/or personal intimacy with the emperor: the imperial women, foremost being his mother Agrippina and later his wife Poppaea Sabina;

Nero's (other) amatory favorites, who were unsuitable in various ways – the freedwoman Acte, the eunuch Sporus, and so on; and, finally, the friends who shared in and encouraged Nero in his predilections, men like Petronius, his famous "arbiter of elegance." By the very fact of their personal intimacy with the emperor, these persons could influence public policy in a way that was impossible for more remote and formal advisors.

It was the imperial freedmen and *equites* (men of equestrian rank – together making up the emperor's social and political dependents, his *clientela*), however, who staffed the most important offices and operated at the heart of the imperial system, accumulating immense wealth and exercising unprecedented power. These new men served as prefects and procurators – ministers, as it were – in the imperial bureaucracy who represented and acted under the authority of the emperor both in Rome and throughout the empire. They had the ear of the emperor and owed their formal loyalty only to him. Among the most powerful positions with defined spheres of responsibility occupied by these men were the minister *a libellis* (for petitions), *a rationibus* (for finance), *ab epistulis Latinis* (for Latin correspondence), and *ab epistulis Graecis* (for Greek correspondence). Together with these were the more public positions of the prefects who held pivotal offices such as the *praefectus annonae* in charge of the grain dole, the *praefectus urbi* in charge of the city of Rome itself, and the *praefectus praetorio* in charge of the Praetorian Guard. Finally, there were the procurators who governed the imperial provinces (those provinces under the control of the emperor) and oversaw vital services such as the food and water supplies for Rome. All of these positions were instrumental in the efficient running of the empire and in the maintenance of the emperor's control over it.

The success of these men was a vivid and irritating reminder to the traditional economic and political elites that they were living in a new system in which their customary rights and privileges were being curtailed and usurped. The freedman Narcissus, who flourished under Claudius and, for a time, Nero, is a good example of the heights to which the imperial freedmen could attain. Dio, in a kind of epitaph following the account of Narcissus' death, says that he had "wielded the greatest power of any man of his time, for he had possessed more than 400,000,000 sesterces, and cities and kings had paid court to him" (Dio 60.34.4). Membership in the upper echelons of the imperial household came to constitute a new kind of elite class, grounded in wealth and power quite visibly not based upon traditional requirements of birth and status. Indeed, this new power elite, whose most visible members were Greek and former slaves, was, in the eyes of traditional elites, an affront and assault on their time-honored and scrupulously defended privileges.

The philosopher Epictetus offers a window into the actual workings of the imperial court, formed by his experiences in the courts of Nero and Domitian as the slave of Epaphroditus, a wealthy freedman of Nero. Albeit part of a hostile philosophical critique, Epictetus details some of the realities of the household system, particularly the potential humiliations faced by senatorial, patrician figures seeking benefits and advancement. Benefactions had to be sought through courting the goodwill and favor of their social inferiors, the *equites* and freedmen of the imperial house:

> For the sake of these mighty and dignified offices and honors you kiss the hands of another man's slaves – and aren't you then the slave of men who are not free themselves? (Epictetus 4.1.148)

Epaphroditus himself serves as an example of how distinguished men became hypocrites, fawning over those far inferior to themselves, even their own slaves and former slaves:

> Epaphroditus had a shoemaker whom he sold because he was good for nothing. This fellow by some good luck was bought by one of Caesar's men, and became Caesar's shoemaker. You should have seen what respect Epaphroditus paid to him: "How does the good Felicion do, if I may ask?" Then if any of us asked "What is master [Epaphroditus] doing?" the answer was "He is consulting about something with Felicion." Had he not sold the man as good for nothing? Who then made him wise all of a sudden? (Epictetus 1.19.17–23)

The relationship between Nero and his household advisors was initially one of unprecedented reliance on and control by those "helpers." Indeed, because Nero ascended to power at such a young age (just shy of his seventeenth birthday), mentors for the new emperor were a practical necessity. The early part of Nero's reign thus took the form of a regency under the control of three powerful figures: his mother, Agrippina, his advisor and former tutor, Seneca, and the head of the Praetorian Guard, Burrus. This was a situation rife with the possibility of dissention and conflict. The latter two acted in concert to formulate the new emperor's policy and direct his decision-making while working to counteract the influence of Agrippina. She, in turn, saw herself as possessing an authority akin to that of the emperor and a position strong enough for her to act without Nero's approval and even in opposition to Nero's wishes.

Indeed, Agrippina's position in the new regime was unprecedented. As Dio recounts it,

> At first Agrippina managed all the business of the empire for Nero. She and her son used to go out in public together, often reclining in the same litter, though more commonly she would be carried while he walked beside her. She also received the various embassies and sent letters to peoples and governors and kings. (Dio 61.3.2)

Like her mother, the elder Agrippina, who contended with Tiberius (and lost), and many other imperial women who preceded her, Agrippina was a locus of power in her own right, and she was not the least hesitant in building, maintaining, and exercising that power. Not only had she effectually conferred the imperial power on Nero through her manipulation of her husband Claudius, but her own extensive *clientela* and the ruthless use of her position were an expression of power independent of the emperor.

Agrippina's public prominence was by its very nature problematic and contentious; for there to be two emperors, much less one of them a woman, would simply not do. Thus, Seneca and Burrus tried to counteract Agrippina's attempts at such public demonstrations of power. Dio recounts an incident early in Nero's reign where a crisis of form and convention was narrowly averted.

> An embassy of the Armenians arrived, and Agrippina wished to ascend the tribunal from which Nero was speaking to them. Seneca and Burrus, seeing her approach, persuaded Nero to step down from the tribunal and meet his mother before she could reach it as though to give her a special greeting. Then once they had accomplished this, they made excuses and did not re-ascend the tribunal, so that the weakness in the empire would not become apparent to the foreigners. Thereafter, they worked hard to prevent any public business from being placed in her hands. (Dio 61.3.3–4)

Clearly, the display of status and power could be as important as its exercise. The fraught nature of Agrippina's position is further underscored in Tacitus' account of Agrippina sitting behind a curtain and secretly listening to Senate meetings held in the imperial residence for that very purpose (*Annals* 13.5). These episodes demonstrate both the extent of Agrippina's involvement in government and the limitations on that involvement dictated by longstanding and deeply held prejudices against women exercising power.

Agrippina's pre-eminent position, however, was not simply a usurpation of power occurring behind the scenes but also a recognized fact, and her prominence conveyed a pointed political message and served a policy purpose. Agrippina's mere presence underscored and strengthened the new regime's assertion that it constituted a return to Augustan roots and to the rewards of the stabilizing Augustan system, since Nero was the great-great-grandson of Augustus on his mother's side. Agrippina was thus a physical and symbolic link between first and last of the Julio-Claudians. The imperial women, in fact, regularly served as instruments of legitimacy, establishing and reinforcing the emperor's right to rule as the head of the Julio-Claudian family. The utility of imperial women as legitimizing agents is particularly evident in the case of Nero; it defined their relationships to him and effectively determined their subsequent fates. Besides his mother Agrippina, both of the daughters of Claudius found themselves the victims of Nero's attentions: Octavia, whose marriage to Nero then aged 15 helped to legitimize his claim to the succession, was subsequently and clumsily discarded – divorced, exiled, and put to death. Later, in 66, Octavia's less-well-known sister Antonia was killed for having refused to marry Nero, apparently a late gambit to increase his popularity and legitimacy. Suetonius makes short work of Nero's behavior toward his relations: "there was no kind of relationship which he did not destroy by criminal abuse" (*Nero* 35.4).

The prominence of women in the imperial household of the Julio-Claudians was also the result of the dearth of male members whose elimination was often deemed necessary by the emperor or his advisors because of their potential claim on the position of the *princeps*, whether they evidenced any desire to pursue that claim or not. In turn, any male blood relation of Augustus might serve as a potential or actual focus of popular sentiment or discontent, and so they were threats to Nero's position and to the legitimacy upon which it was based. Indeed, in order to secure and maintain his place as the only heir to the Augustan patrimony in all its public and private aspects, Nero and his associates completed the inadvertent project begun by the successors of Augustus of extirpating the Julio-Claudian line. After Nero there was political chaos, civil war, and the replacement of the Julio-Claudian dynasty by the Flavians due in part to the simple fact that by the end of his reign there were no more Julio-Claudians left.

Still, the emperors consistently represented themselves and their family as moral exemplars, performing a politically useful and arguably necessary role in the wake of the social dislocations and moral degeneration which, as the Romans saw it, were the products, on the one hand, of imperial expansion and increasing wealth and, on the other, of the political chaos of the dying Republic. The role of upholder and epitome of traditional family values became central to imperial ideology, both a justification of fitness to rule and an emblem of the benefits of the peace and stability predicated upon the new autocratic regime which the entire society, with special reference to the remnants of the traditional nobility, could and should emulate. Central to this imperial household propaganda was the representation of female virtues as embodied in the female members

of the imperial family. Imperial women were expected to perform the roles of traditional female family members – the loyal, industrious, and dutiful mother, wife, or daughter.

While maintaining and representing traditional emulative models of Roman womanhood, the women of the imperial household also exercised enormous influence over emperors, as we have seen in the case of Agrippina. This influence in itself was akin to the traditional pre-eminent position of the *materfamilias* as the partner of the *paterfamilias*, supervising household management and advising the head of the household on matters involving both the private and public lives of her husband and family. Aristocratic women as a matter of course participated in family councils, gave advice to their husbands and, out of necessity, especially in the late Republic, not only managed the household but also performed the traditionally male tasks of preserving and furthering the interests of the *domus* in the public sphere in the absence of males in authority due to the deaths and the dislocations of exile and civil war generally. Thus, the scope of responsibility for many elite women became more explicitly public and political at the end of the Republic, a precursor to the prominence of the women of the imperial family.

One result of the public performance of domesticity was that the public itself took a personal interest in the imperial family and became invested in the fortunes of this "ideal" family and its individual members. Despite repeated inconvenient and off-message assaults on this ideological program – notably, the scandalous affairs of the two Julias, Augustus' daughter and granddaughter, and later of Claudius' wife Messalina – the imperial woman as virtuous model did not lose its emotive power and persuasiveness. Claudius' wife and Nero's mother Agrippina cultivated those domestic roles and was seen to do so by the populace, whatever subsequent historians might say about her. So too, Nero's wife Octavia elicited profound and destabilizing sympathy from the public due to the assaults on her domestic status and privileges. The mob rioted when Nero divorced and exiled her, setting her aside in favor of Poppaea Sabina, although Nero was temporarily forced to take Octavia back as wife and restore at least the public image of domestic harmony (*Annals* 14.60).

In the struggle for power and influence, popular support and political factions coalesced around various members of the imperial family, especially around the imperial women. The composition of these factions was socially heterogeneous: freedmen, *equites*, and senators were all to be found together in any one faction. Because personal relationships, both formal and informal, were bound up in the struggles around the emperor for the possession and exercise of power, any relations which were unsanctioned could be seen as a threat not only to other factions and to those jockeying for power and influence but also to the emperor himself. The imperial freedmen secretaries, themselves powerful members of the imperial household, were closely, and sometimes sexually, linked to members of the imperial family. These personal liaisons amounted to political alliances which shaped and often determined their own decision-making. This was the situation that the freedmen faced in the crisis surrounding Claudius' wife Messalina and in the wake of her downfall. Narcissus was Messalina's ally but two other freedmen, Pallas and Callistus, finally alerted the emperor to Messalina's behavior when the usurpation of Claudius and the consequent threat to their own lives and positions became a real possibility. In turn, those freedmen who had engineered the demise of Messalina found that it was in their interest to promote Nero, the son of Agrippina, rather than Britannicus, the son of Messalina, as the heir to the imperial power, quite reasonably

fearing the possibility of the latter seeking revenge. Policy positions were thus often expressions of basic self-interest and self-preservation.

In the midst of these sorts of household intrigues, imperial females who were, or were perceived to be, potential figures of power and the focus of faction were subject to attack and delegitimization, almost invariably effected through accusations of a sexual nature. (This is true both of accusations made at the time and of the later historical assessment of these women by authors such as Tacitus who saw their influence as inherently unnatural and corrupting.) The portrayal of Agrippina, in particular, owes a fair amount to Roman stereotypes of threatening and powerful women: the cruel stepmother, the sexual transgressor, the female commander. Each of these stereotypes is a pointed inversion of a positive Roman female type: the nurturing *materfamilias*, the faithful wife, the subservient woman. Tacitus gives a précis of Agrippina upon her marriage to Claudius which encapsulates his view of her character and motivations:

> After that the state was transformed, and everything came under the control of a woman, but one who did not, like Messalina, toy with the Roman government like a plaything. It was a strict and masculine kind of slavery: in public there was austerity and, more often, arrogance; and at home no sexual impropriety, unless it cleared the way to despotism. She had an immense greed for gold, using the pretext that she acquired it as a reserve for the imperial power. (*Annals* 12.7)

At the opening of book 14 of the *Annals*, Tacitus also vividly describes the sort of competing claims and sexual manipulations, successful or otherwise, which the women of the imperial household exercised upon Nero. It is a tangled situation which shows the complex strands of influence and manipulation exercised to a greater or lesser degree by the women and advisors around the emperor. Nero was married to Octavia but had come to despise her. Agrippina opposed a divorce and, from a political standpoint, was correct to do so, as it turned out to be a deeply unpopular and destabilizing move. Nero's then lover and subsequent wife, Poppaea Sabina, thus prodded Nero to eliminate Agrippina to pave the way for her own marriage to the emperor. Agrippina's response was to entice Nero into incestuous relations. Seneca then brought in Acte to persuade Nero to leave off this unnatural relationship as its exposure would threaten his very position as emperor (*Annals* 14.1). The truth or falsehood of any of these assertions is, of course, unrecoverable, particularly that of the most incendiary charge, incest. Tacitus feigns skepticism but is willing to believe it since, he asserts, Agrippina

> had after all had illicit sex with Marcus Lepidus [her brother-in-law] as a girl because of her lust for power; with that same craving she had abandoned herself to the appetites of Pallas; and she had been trained in all manner of immorality through marriage to her uncle. (*Annals* 14.2)

As Tacitus's description suggests, Agrippina's role of sexual transgressor had substantial emotive power as both a social and political problematic. In addition to the accounts of attempted or accomplished incest – depending upon which historian (if any) one chooses to believe – Agrippina was also reputedly the lover of the freedman and imperial advisor Pallas. Both acts are characterized as calculated attempts to control and maintain power through sexual manipulation, and central to the unnaturalness of this sexual behavior is

its lack of erotic impulse: sex is used cold-bloodedly to secure power. The Agrippina in our historical accounts is thus an archetype of female threat: the asexual calculator who would use sex to further policy, a woman not sexually out of control (as, for example, the two Julias or Messalina) but one disconnected from natural sexual desires. To be sexual and to be unsexed were both potentially problematic for imperial women, and both exemplified paradoxically opposite yet equally abnormal characteristics in those with unlimited power, either an unbridled loss of personal control in the pursuit of lust or an excessive self-control in the pursuit of power. We are, of course, dealing here with representations and rumors reinforced by plausibility, part of the repertoire of court intrigue and gossip used for political ends. The accusation of incest, in particular, has the effect of characterizing both Agrippina and Nero in monstrous terms emblematic of tyrannical perversion.

According to Tacitus, Agrippina is especially driven by a lust for power. On the one hand she is a grasping and unnatural stepmother, a mirror of Livia, the first female of the first imperial dynasty, since both possess a "female power" (*muliebris impotentia*, *Annals* 12.57.3 and 1.4.5 respectively), and both perversely make the state subservient to themselves. The phrase *muliebris impotentia* is suggestively ambiguous, since *impotentia*, "unbounded power," can have the sense both of absolute power and of lack of the power for self-control, two cardinal sins for women in positions of influence. As we have seen, Agrippina was not shy about publically demonstrating her position and the power attendant upon it, going beyond what any other imperial woman had previously been able to do in asserting and exercising authority. She often accompanied Nero in public when he was conducting business or giving an audience to foreign ambassadors, a practice which Dio calls "one of the most remarkable sights of the time" (Dio, 61.33.7). Tacitus even goes so far as to say that Nero, scandalously, "was ruled by a woman" (*Annals* 13.6).

Agrippina also extended her influence to include the Praetorian Guard. She was instrumental in having her associate Burrus appointed as praetorian prefect, the commander of the guard. Agrippina's orchestration of Nero's ascension, whose central act was the presentation of the new emperor to the Praetorian Guard and the receiving of their pledge of loyalty, demonstrates that she was fully aware of the centrality of the guard as a foundation of the imperial power and would not hesitate to influence it and control it if she could. This influence over the Praetorian Guard was, however, a two-edged sword: through it Agrippina helped to effect her exercise of power, but it also and inevitably became a source of resentment and a prime example of her female overreaching. Agrippina's unnatural grasping for power, so understood, later becomes the public justification for Nero's matricide where he reveals that Agrippina wanted to be a full partner in power (*consortium imperii*) and to have the guard pledge their loyalty to her (*Annals* 14.11.1). This was not an empty accusation: Nero's farcical plot to assassinate Agrippina was necessitated by the fact that he could not trust the Praetorian Guards to do away with her (Dio. 61.13.5).

For Roman authors describing the reign of the last of the Julio-Claudians, the roles that Agrippina assumed and exercised function as a manifestation and index of the failings and dysfunctions of the early imperial system under that first dynasty. Although there must be a fair amount of truth to these characterizations, they need to be approached with caution since later writers used them for their own ideological ends in retrospectively characterizing and condemning Nero and his predecessors, especially as counter and

negative exempla to the proper model of the current emperor and his household. The Agrippina of our sources is a literary creation, a representation and a symbol, who occupies the role of negative exemplum within the conventions of Roman historical and biographical moralizing rhetoric.

The event which decisively weakened Agrippina's power and shifted Nero's deference from her to Seneca appears to have been Nero's affair with the freedwoman Acte. In Tacitus' phrasing, Agrippina "just like a woman" (*Annals* 13.13) grumbled incessantly about her, inadvertently alienating the emperor in the process. As in so much of the literature, the historian's examination of the workings of power is here voyeuristically focused on the sordid interior personal and emotional dramas of the household; political influence and its public consequences are shown as subject to the personal whims and desires, often sexual, of the members of the household, including the emperor. In this storyline, Agrippina could make her son emperor, but she could also scheme to remove him. When she saw Nero slipping from her control, she threatened to back his stepbrother Britannicus as an alternative emperor, a threat which Nero took seriously enough to have Britannicus murdered. The episode provides a telling glimpse into the heart of the imperial family, exposing the fraught contestations and guileful maneuverings of all parties in the face of the rewards and dangers of intimate association with the emperor. Nero emerges here as a fully fledged actor in the drama of the imperial family, asserting an insidious control over the household when he disposes of his potential rival in full view of those gathered at his dinner table. The innermost reality of life in the imperial household is here represented as one of inescapable duplicity with fatal consequences for those who are unable or unwilling to participate in the emperor's fictions, or who have the misfortune to be cast in the wrong role.

> There was a stir among the company; some were taken by surprise and scattered, while those whose understanding was keener remained motionless with their eyes fixed on Nero. He, still reclining and seemingly unaware of what was happening, said that this was a common occurrence connected with the epilepsy which Britannicus had been afflicted with from infancy and that his sight and senses would gradually return. As for Agrippina, though she tried to control her expression, her terror and confusion were visible and it was clear that she was just as ignorant as Octavia, Britannicus's own sister. She saw, in fact, that she had lost her only remaining source of influence, and that here was a precedent for murder in the family. Even Octavia, despite her youthful inexperience, had learned to hide her grief, her affection, and indeed every emotion. And so after a brief pause the dinner revelries continued. (*Annals* 13.16)

Central to the episode is the pretence of innocence and unconcern by both Nero and the family members present who understood perfectly well what was happening. The necessity of dissimulation thus becomes a defining feature of the imperial household where feigning and doublespeak are the only possible responses to Nero's misbehavior. Acting, in short, was a necessary method of dealing with the actor-emperor Nero's arbitrary and threatening exercise of power.

And so the household becomes the stage where the various personal and imperial defects of Nero are displayed: his cruelty, incompetence, narcissism, rashness, and paralysis. Indeed, Tacitus seems consciously to frame his story of the house of the Julio-Claudians from Augustus to Nero as a tragic narrative, evoking the mythic paradigm

of the house of Atreus and its stories of the intrafamilial murders of Agamemnon, Clytemnestra, and Orestes, each of whom found a ready parallel in the persons of Claudius, Agrippina, and Nero. Even at the time, Nero and Orestes were explicitly and publicly compared – even by Nero. He had the cheek to play "Orestes the Matricide" on stage, and Suetonius records an anonymous lampoon that made the rounds in Greek verse: "Nero, Orestes, Alcmeon slew their mothers" (*Nero* 39). The entire sordid scene of Agrippina's murder, in fact, reads like a farcical version of the Aescylean tale of Orestes' matricide of Clytemnestra. In the wake of his murderous act, Nero is described as terrified and tormented by the Furies, just as Orestes had been (*Nero* 34). So, too, the downfall of Octavia, Nero's wife and stepsister, has many of the elements of tragedy, so much so that the story was retold on stage after Nero's death in the pseudo-Senecan play *Octavia*. It is therefore rather unfortunate that Tacitus' account of Nero's own death is lost, and so it is not possible to see whether or to what extent he characterized that event in tragic terms as well. Still, as mirrors and inversions of Augustus and Livia, the first imperial couple, Nero and Agrippina close the circle of the Julio-Claudian dynasty in Tacitus' narrative, and their demise provides a rhetorically satisfying and implicitly inevitable end to, as Tacitus saw it, the fatally flawed first dynasty of the Caesars.

While in his first years the responsibilities of the empire were given over to his mother Agrippina and to his advisors Seneca and Burrus, as Nero grew older he quickly began to assert more of his own authority through the influence of other "associates" besides those three. These must have been his personal friends and companions, the sort who accompanied Nero on his nighttime rampages through the dark streets of Rome (*Annals* 13.25; *Nero* 26) and who shared in and indulged his other pleasures, something that even Seneca had attempted in his efforts to manage the young emperor.

> He came to despise the good advice he was given, since he was always hearing from his associates "Why do you submit to them?" "Do you fear them?" "Don't you know that you are Caesar and that you have authority over them rather than they over you?" and he determined not to acknowledge that his mother was superior to him or to submit to Seneca and Burrus as being wiser. Finally, he lost all shame, dashed to the ground and trampled all their precepts, and began to follow in the footsteps of Gaius [Caligula]. (Dio 61.4.5–61.5.1)

One of the realities of the imperial household and of the nature of power generally is its propensity both to isolate and to enable holders of power; becoming trapped in and warped by their position, there is an almost inevitable distancing from reality. Nero was particularly subject to these sorts of dislocations, insulated as he was from reality and indulged in by everyone around him. Dio perhaps overstates the case but there is no reason to discount his characterization of Nero's situation:

> Nero did not hear a word of truth from anybody and he saw no one except those who approved of what he did. He thought that his past deeds remained secret or even, perhaps, that there was nothing wrong in them. And so he became much worse in other respects as well. He came to believe that anything that was in his power to do was right, and he listened to those who were motivated by fear or flattery as though they were utterly sincere in what they said. (Dio 61.11.1)

Even Burrus and Seneca indulged Nero, encouraging him to perform on stage and going so far as to coach him and orchestrate the public applause and adulation: "Beside him stood Burrus and Seneca, like teachers, promoting him, and they would wave their arms and togas at his every utterance and lead the rest of the audience in doing the same" (Dio 61.20.3).

Although Agrippina looms large over Nero's reign, she lasted only a short time after Nero, through her diligent efforts, became emperor in 54. By 57 they had become completely estranged; Nero stripped her of her privileges, removed her guard and banned her from the imperial palace (*Annals* 13.18–19). She was dead by 59, but Nero himself lived for another nine years. Seneca, too, eventually gave up on the uncontrollable emperor. Pleading illness, he retired to private life and, in an effort to minimize himself as a target, offered to hand over all of his substantial property to Nero (Dio 62.25.3). The departures and deaths of Agrippina, Burrus, and Seneca left Nero in the hands of people who had little interest in or ability to check his transgressive private or public behavior. Since Nero was by nature uninterested in the details of governing, he turned over much of the running of the government to his freedmen, and so ended up replicating one of the worst excesses of his predecessor Claudius. The most notorious of these freedmen was Tigellinus who thoroughly indulged Nero and orchestrated his public assaults on traditional family values.

There is a great contrast, therefore, between the promise of Nero's reign at its inception and its subsequent realization. At the beginning of his reign, Nero's program was explicitly Augustan with a vow to rule as the first *princeps* had, in particular to keep his household and the state separate (*Annals* 13.4). However, Nero's reign, particularly as expressed through the character of the imperial household, not only failed to live up to the Augustan standard but was in the end substantially anti-Augustan in a consciously post-Augustan era. The Neronian *domus* came to represent, and indeed came to represent itself as, the antithesis of the dynastic founder's household. This is certainly true once Nero came into his own, having freed himself from and discarded the behavioral and political restraints, both in public and in private, of Burrus, Seneca, and Agrippina in favor of the sycophantic ministrations of his closest friends and household intimates.

Nero's performance as emperor needs to be understood in the light of and as a response to – and indeed repudiation of – the Augustan model, since Nero's imperial self-presentation came to be a good deal, and provocatively, anti-Augustan. Rather than playing the role that Augustus had adopted of the humble, simple, old-fashioned, private family man, Nero adopted a self-shaped persona which was regal, ostentatious, baroque, prodigal, and untraditional. Indeed, Nero's reign is increasingly marked by assaults on traditional Roman moral codes and conventions of behavior. In public, he repeatedly transgressed and flaunted the protocols of behavior expected of a serious Roman magistrate. From his hairstyle and clothing to his acting, singing, and athletic performances, Nero was obstinately and ostentatiously contrarian, his most outré public acts amounting to direct provocations against the moral, social, and political constraints to which he found he was expected to adhere as emperor. These provocations found their most perverse expression under the tutelage of Tigellinus whose power was maintained and strengthened (as Seneca's was) by diverting and indulging the young emperor in his peccadilloes and his preference for associating with suspect types: louche aristocrats, social inferiors, actors, athletes, performers of all sorts – virtually the entire class of *infames*,

the socially disreputable – culminating in Nero's two notorious same-sex marriages to Doryphorus and Sporus, the one as "bride" to a freedman and the other as "husband" to a eunuch.

What are we to make of these sorts of episodes which are so transgressive of traditional moral and social norms? Are they evidence of Nero's perverse capriciousness (what the ancients would have called "tyranny"), and so a mark of madness as our authors would suggest? Were they a series of juvenile escapades whose only purpose was to shock his elders (they certainly shocked his successors)? As one explanation for such anti-traditional behavior, it could be argued that Nero was attempting – to what degree programmatically it is impossible to judge – to introduce and acclimate Romans to Greek social and cultural practices, to further a Hellenization of Roman society. Nero clearly wanted to be the Hellenistic monarch of a Romano-Greek empire.

Whatever Nero's motivations, the delicate and fraught process by which the imperial system emerging under the Julio-Claudians had sought to understand, define, and delimit a new relationship between public and private, necessitated by the centrality of the imperial household, span out of control. Nero had a penchant for exhibitionism, a basic desire to share publicly what convention demanded be kept private; activities which would and should ordinarily be "covered in darkness," as Tacitus puts it (*Annals* 15.37), were purposefully brought into the open. Whether the products of madness, or manifestations of his perverse sense of humor, or conscious, albeit radical, expressions of an agenda, Nero's travesties of tradition and propriety were often publicly staged events which must have been at some level designedly outrageous and offensive. Nero consciously played with and, in effect, satirized Roman traditional family values, making a mockery of marriage in particular. This transgressive behavior is thus on a par with Nero's appropriation of the forms of the traditional military triumph – one of the most emotively powerful public rituals in Rome – to celebrate his athletic victories, going so far as to ride in the ceremonial chariot used by Augustus (*Nero* 25). Nero went out of his way to transform the regular components of domesticity, such as dining and marriage, into public spectacles, performing those events as opulent displays and outrageously inverted parodies of traditional domesticity. Consider the case of Sporus, the boy who had the misfortune to bear a striking resemblance to the deceased Poppaea Sabina.

> Nero had the testicles of a boy named Sporus cut off and attempted to transform him into a woman, marrying him with a dowry and bridal veil and all rites of marriage in a ceremony attended by many. Then, he took him to his house where he treated him as his wife. Someone made a clever joke which is still told that it would have been a good thing for humanity if Nero's father Domitius had had such a wife. This Sporus, decked out in the ornaments of an empress and carried in a litter, he took with him around the meeting places and markets of Greece and later, at Rome, during [or in the Street of] the Sigillaria, kissing him from time to time. (*Nero* 28)

It is noteworthy that the public performance and display of this marriage was done indiscriminately in Greece, but in Rome Nero seems to have restricted it to the Sigillaria, which was associated with the festival of the Saturnalia where dressing up and playful social inversions traditionally occurred. This and other similarly outrageous events were exercises in, depending on one's perspective, travestying or reinventing the Roman household. Acting out on the public stage, Nero was rewriting conventional familial

and social mores, staging one *succès de scandale* after another, and we should not be particularly surprised that the exhibitionist actor-emperor Nero engaged in such performances.

Nero's public displays and performances, however salacious, were also part of a rational political calculation: the cultivation of the plebs as a counterweight to an increasingly hostile senatorial elite. In fact, as both Tacitus and Suetonius recount, these public displays were spurred by the demands of the mob, as those authors characterize the common masses. Nero's relationship with the populace was also framed as an association of close friends and even family members. As Tacitus observes with distain: "To make people believe that there was nowhere else as dear to him [as Rome], Nero held dinner parties in public places and used the whole city as though it were his own house" (*Annals* 15.37). Indeed, as a general principle, imperial benefactions were at their base extensions of the traditional workings of Roman household arrangements and the patron–client system which was grounded in affiliations with the *domus* as an extended social structure of loyalty and dependence. Just as patrons provided food and monetary handouts to their dependents, so too the emperors spread their largess to the entire Roman public as though they were all his clients – in effect, all members of his household. Nero loved pomp and ceremony, providing extravagant entertainments to the public, and he shared their pleasure in them. The plebs, whom our elite ancient historians regard as a sordid rabble, were quite loyal to Nero; they appreciated his attentions and reveled in his humiliations of the traditional senatorial elites whom they widely feared and despised.

The most glaring and tangible manifestation of the translation of the private into the public was the physical remaking of the center of the city of Rome itself into the Domus Aurea, the infamous Golden House, a public–private *domus* which occupied a fair portion of the central Roman urban space (see Heste and von Hesburg in this volume). However, from another perspective, the Domus Aurea was not so much an aberration as the culmination of the conceptual and physical processes whereby the household of the Julio-Claudians came to embrace the whole of the Roman people and to occupy a central position in the Roman state. The physical expansion of the emperor's house in the city of Rome replicated and reified the comprehensive expansion of the social and political scope of the imperial household.

In addition, although it was conceived on an unprecedented scale, the Golden House which the Great Fire made possible was not as radical a transformation of the nature of the Roman household and household space as one might imagine. The elite *domus* had always been a mixed public–private space where the patron and magistrate conducted business and the clients and others gathered to influence and pay respects to the head of the household. Those visitors were thus exposed to, experienced, and were able to enjoy as well, those visible manifestations of the power and prestige of the *paterfamilias* as displayed in the physical household arrangements, decorations, and largesse. The Domus Aurea performed the same function, only on a citywide scale. Sharing in Nero's conspicuous consumption and display was the whole populace of Rome, what the elite disdainfully called the *vulgus.* But the "mob" was surely happy to partake of these expressions of imperial munificence, including the Golden House itself, despite Tacitus' assertion that the project was universally despised, since it gave them greater access to the enjoyment of private gardens and other luxuries until then often exclusive to the elites.

In 67, Nero embarked upon his grand tour of Greece and left Rome in the charge of another freedman, Helius, who seems to have been a responsible enough figure. Yet events were spinning out of control. Facing revolt and the threat of revolt by various governors of the western provinces, Helius repeatedly attempted to impress upon Nero the seriousness of the situation and to get him to return to the capital, finally going to Greece in person to convince the distracted emperor. Nero returned to Rome (where he celebrated his athletic pseudo-triumph) and might still have saved the situation if he had acted promptly. However, in the end, Nero awoke to an empty palace and found that he had been abandoned by most of the household – friends, guards, and attendants had all vanished (*Nero* 47). Only a few members of the household, and those the least distinguished and consequential, remained loyal to the emperor. The freedmen Phaon and Epaphroditus and the eunuch Sporus were the only ones who stayed with Nero to the end, accompanying him on his aborted flight and witnessing his suicide (Dio 66.28.3). After his death it was his nurses, Egloge and Alexandria, and his mistress, Acte, outlasting all the wives and lovers of the emperor, who buried him with some dignity (*Nero* 50).

Despite the turbulences at the very apex of the imperial household, sometimes swallowing up family members, freedmen, and emperors alike, in the mundane and quotidian operations of government the imperial household functioned quite well for the most part. The imperial slaves and freedmen served as the stabilizing functionaries of the imperial administration, providing continuity and experience and ensuring a stable running of the governmental apparatus. The state might be subject to the sometimes disastrous failings, misjudgments, and vagaries of individuals at the height of power, but the household remained the one essential apparatus for the continued successful operation of the empire. The overall effectiveness of the imperial household as an administrative system, obscured by the famous and lurid stories of the intrigues of a few prominent members, ensured its own continuance, expansion, and entrenchment as the central mechanism of imperial rule. Emperors and imperial dynasties could change, but the imperial household proved indispensible.

FURTHER READING

The Roman household has been a particular focus of research in recent years; see, among many others, Hales (2003), Cooper (2007), and Hanson (2010). The changing nature of the *domus* in the first centuries BC and AD in relation to the Julio-Claudians is treated in Severy (2003) and Milnor (2005).

On the development of the early imperial court and its institutionalized workings, see Millar (1977), Lintott (1993), and Wallace-Hadrill (1996). The emperor's role as patron and head of the Roman empire *qua* household is treated in Yavetz (1969), Alföldi (1971), and Dettenhofer (2000).

The character of Nero's court and his rule, especially its Hellenizing and theatrical bent, is explored, in whole or in part, in Rudich (1993) and (1997), Woodman (1993), Bartsch (1994), and Manning (1994). Many of the articles in Elsner and Masters (1994) discuss issues of relevance.

The position of freedmen and slaves in the imperial court is discussed in Boulvert (1970), Weaver (1972), and Kaplan (1990).

Among the numerous studies of imperial women, Fischler (1994), Corbier (1995), Wood (1999), and Ginsburg (2005) cover various aspects. Barrett (1996) is a good introduction to the provocative figure of Agrippina the Younger.

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CHAPTER 7

Religion

Darja Šterbenc Erker

The Emperor and Religion

Two different types of sources – historical and epigraphic – inform us about Nero's religious attitudes. Tacitus and Suetonius, both writing much later than the reign of Nero, depict the emperor as someone who despised religion. According to the biographer Suetonius, Nero reviled all religious cults except that of Dea Syria, the goddess worshipped in Syria under the name Atargatis. From the Roman point of view, then, she was a foreign goddess: her worship was a kind of religious deviation. But even then, Suetonius goes on, Nero changed his mind about Dea Syria and urinated on her statue (*Nero* 56). The historian Tacitus stresses that Nero showed disdain for the ritual obligations towards immortal gods as well as for his fellow citizens and parents (*Annals* 14.22). And after the disastrous fire in AD 64 that destroyed much of Rome, Nero famously seized on the Christians of Rome as scapegoats and had them arrested and condemned to die in the amphitheater (*Annals* 15.44; see Maier in this volume).

On the other hand, contemporary sources on the religious rituals performed by Nero or on his behalf reveal that during his reign Julio-Claudian religious practices were conducted as usual. Contempt for religion was a *topos* for the historians who describe Nero as a tyrant-emperor, but it should not be taken at face value. Nero's dissolute attitude to religion, highlighted by Suetonius and Tacitus, is an integral part of the rhetorical manipulation and denigration of Nero as "bad" emperor.

Nero's Priestly Offices

Nero, like all Roman emperors, concentrated religious as well as political and military power in his own hands. Like every new emperor, he took over the office of the *pontifex*

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maximus, the head of the pontiffs. The *pontifex* supervised the religious life of the Roman state, and the emperor as its head was the highest authority on religious matters in Rome. This priestly office, however, was only one among several which Nero took on. In AD 50 the emperor Claudius adopted Nero: to mark the occasion, gold coins were issued (*Roman Imperial Coinage* (*RIC*) I^2 125, no. 76; 129, no. 107). The inscription on the coins states that the senate passed a decree co-opting Nero as a supernumerary member of the augural and the pontifical colleges and as a member of the *septemviri epulonum* (the college of seven men who arranged the sacrificial banquet to Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva) as well as the *quindecemviri sacris faciundis* (the priesthood of 15 men who consulted the oracle of the Sibylline Books and controlled the cults which were taken over from Greek cities on the advice of the Sibylline oracle). The symbols of these major priestly colleges of Rome are also depicted on the same coins. First, the curved staff (*lituus*) of the augurs, high priests who conducted the auspices to look for signs of the will of the gods through observing and interpreting thunder and lightning, as well as the flight and activity of birds and sacred chickens. Secondly, the earthenware ladle (*simpuvium*, or *simpulum*), used for pouring libations and a symbol of the *pontifices*: these pontiffs advised the magistrates, the Senate, and other priestly colleges on sacred law (*ius divinum*) and on the correct performance of rituals. Thirdly, the libation bowl (*patera*) is also on the coins as a symbol of the *septemviri epulonum* who arranged the feast in honor of Jupiter at the Roman and Plebeian Games (*ludi Romani*; *ludi Plebei*). Finally a tripod (*tripus*), used for libations and sacrifices, alluded to Nero's membership in the priesthood of the *quindecemviri sacris faciundis*. Since only the emperor could accumulate so many high religious offices, Nero's membership of these colleges implied that he was to be the successor to Claudius. And as a member of these four major priesthoods of Rome, Nero took an active part in the religious activities of the public religion, the worship of the gods on behalf of *res publica*. The future emperor as a priest communicated with the supreme gods on behalf of the political community.

On his accession, the senate awarded Nero the honorific name *Augustus*, "the revered one," underlining his relationship with the religious sphere. This nomenclature originally denoted sacred places and venerable objects but from 27 BC onwards it referred to Octavian/Augustus, and later to emperors. Occasionally other members of the imperial family were granted the title too: Nero awarded the honorific *Augusta* to his wife Sabina Poppaea and to the new-born Claudia (who died while still a baby). The attribution of this title showed that not only the emperor but also his family approached the sphere of the divine. Further, Nero emphasized his closeness to the gods by depicting himself wearing a radiate crown on coins. In the vestibule area of the Golden House Nero erected a colossal statue of himself probably adorned with a radiate crown (Suetonius, *Nero* 31; Ferguson (1970) 46–50). Before, this attribute of the sun god had been restricted to deified members of the imperial house (Fishwick (1987) 296: for identification of Nero with the sun, see Mratschek in this volume).

The Worship of the Imperial Family in Rome

Emperor cult did not emerge at once but developed gradually out of the honors paid to Augustus, the first emperor of Rome. By introducing the worship of his own household

gods (*lares Augusti*) and his *Genius* – the *Genius Augusti*, divine protector of a man, personification of his active force, that is to say the life spirit of the current emperor – into the cult of the crossroads (*lares compitales*), Augustus provided an opportunity for the expression of loyalty to his own rule in religious rituals (Gradel (2002) 115–39; see below). A very common type of sacrifice was an offering to the *Genius Augusti* in rituals in every Roman household: from the first century on, incense and wine were offered during public and private meals not only to the *lares* and *penates*, but also to the *Genius Augusti*. Under Nero, the public cult worship of the emperor's *Genius* continued in the form given to it by his adoptive father Claudius, who had deified Livia, his maternal grandmother, on January17, AD 42, and placed her statue in the new Temple of Divus Augustus (Scheid (1998) 81, line 5ff.; Dio 60.5.2; Gradel (2002) 180–88). Claudius had joined the cult of his *Genius* to that of Divus Augustus and Diva Augusta: a cultic innovation interpreted by Gradel as an act of legitimation, with Claudius presenting himself as the true heir of Augustus (Gradel (2002) 187).

For a better understanding of the ruler cult in the age of Nero – that is to say, the worship of the living force of the emperor together with the empress and empress-mother and of the deified male and female members of the imperial household – let us examine some ceremonies which were performed on behalf of the emperor and his family in the city of Rome. Sacrifices on behalf of the living emperor or for deified deceased emperors were made on various occasions, public and private, by individuals or by representatives of a city or a province. Some sacrifices were performed at public festivals which celebrated the emperor's achievements, and most of these festivals were celebrated annually: vows for the welfare of Nero and his wife on January 3, festivals commemorating Nero's accession (the assumption of military and civil power, *imperium*, October 13), his consular assembly (*comitia consularia*, March 4), his pontifical assembly (*comitia pontificalia*, March 5), and his first assumption of tribunicial power (*tribunicia potestas*, December 4). Gradel assumes that the celebration of the *Genius* of the ruling emperor on his birthday and on his accession day was instituted by Caligula or Claudius (Gradel (2002) 162). The birthdays of Nero and his mother as well as commemorations of some deceased members of their family were also celebrated (see below; cf. Scheid (2002) 518–19).

Additionally, special occasions demanded one-off sacrifices or vows for the welfare of the emperor and his family. On January 21, AD 63, vows concerning the accouchement of the empress Sabina Poppaea were acquitted (Scheid (1998) 29, I, line 19ff.). In the same context Tacitus mentions additional rites, supplications, and veneration of the gods by offerings of incense and libations of wine (*Annals* 15.23.2). Later, when the imperial family returned to Rome from Antium, where Poppaea had given birth to Claudia, the priesthood of the Arval Brothers (*fratres Arvales*) performed sacrifices in thanksgiving for the safe return of the emperor's family, offering animal sacrifices to the Capitoline Triad (Jupiter, Juno, Minerva), the goddess Salus Publica (a personification of the public welfare), and to the goddesses Spes (Hope) and Felicitas (Happiness). These sacrifices reveal a theological concept according to which the safe return of the imperial family to Rome was considered to be important to the welfare of the *res publica*. On the same occasion, the *fratres Arvales* performed sacrifices to the *Genius* of the emperor and the female equivalent of the *Genius*, the *Juno*, of Poppaea Augusta and the *Juno* of their daughter Claudia Augusta (on the *Juno*, see, e.g., Petronius, *Satyrica* 25). Moreover,

special sacrifices were performed as a thanksgiving to the gods for the discovery of the conspiracies against Nero in AD 65 and 66. These extraordinary vows were decreed by the Roman Senate, as happened with other public vows on behalf of the emperor and his family.

Ancients invoked the *Genius* as a divine witness when swearing solemnly (e.g. Seneca *Letters* 12.12) and offered him wine libations (e.g. Persius, *Satires* 2.3). *Genius* and *Juno* ceased to exist with the death of the person whom they protected. In the rituals of ruler cult, the *Genius* of the emperor and *Juno* of some of the female members of the imperial household were worshipped with animal sacrifices. The deceased and deified predecessors of the emperor received similar honors. In the reign of Nero, in the new Temple of Divus Augustus on the Palatine, the following deified emperors and their relatives were worshipped by the Arvals: Augustus, Julia Augusta, Claudius, the infant Claudia, and later, Poppaea. For Claudia, who died before she was four months old, priests were presumably appointed by the Senate, but – as Hemelrijk stresses – we have no evidence of this (Hemelrijk (2007) 320), and in any case the consecration and worship of the infant Claudia was unprecedented.

The *fratres Arvales* also played a central role in celebrating the anniversaries of the imperial house. This prestigious priesthood, reorganized by Octavian in 29 BC, was restricted to those of senatorial rank. The individual rites performed at various celebrations are attested by the *Acts of the fratres Arvales* (*Commentarii Fratrum Arvalium*: Scheid (1998)), inscribed on stone plates. The Acts include lists of members and details of the ceremonies celebrated year by year in honor of the goddess Dea Dia (the goddess of crops) and of the members of the imperial household. These Acts were located in the cult centre of the *fratres Arvales*, where a temple (*aedes*) with a statue of Dea Dia was located in a woodland clearing (*lucus*) a few kilometres outside Rome. The number of celebrations varied from year to year. In AD 59, for instance, the *fratres Arvales* performed 15 sacrifices, two of which were part of the cult of the Dea Dia at the end of May (Scheid (1990) 428). Since the Senate decreed on which occasions the *fratres Arvales* were to perform sacrifices, the written account of the sacrifices provides an insight into the performance of regular rites as well as into changes in the Senate's religious policy.

One of the most important festivals organized by the *fratres Arvales* was the celebration of the emperor's birthday. The *dies natalis* of the emperor included a major sacrificial banquet. Here is an example of the record from the *Commentarii Fratrum Arvalium* of the ceremonies on Nero's birthday, December 15, AD 58:

> Isdem co(n)s(ulibus) (ante diem duodeuicesimum) k(alendas) Ian(uarias) L. Salvius Otho Titianus mag(ister) collegi arual(ium) nomine immolauit in / Capitolio ob natalem Neronis Claudi Caesaris Aug(usti) Germ(anici) Iovi b(ouem) marem, Iunoni uaccam, / Mineruae uaccam, Saluti publicae uaccam et Concordiae honoris Agrippinae Aug(ustae) uaccam, / Genio ipsius taurum . . . (*Commentarii Fratrum Arvalium*: Scheid (1998) 27, 66)

> During the same consular year, on the 18th day before the kalends of January, L. Salvius Otho Titianus, head of the college of the *fratres Arvales*, on account of the birthday of Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus, sacrificed in their name on the Capitol an ox to Jupiter, a cow to Juno, a cow to Minerva, a cow to Salus Publica; and a cow to Concordia in honour of Agrippina Augusta, to Nero's *Genius* a bull . . .

From this excerpt we can see that the *fratres Arvales* celebrated the emperor's birthday by several animal sacrifices, conducted by the head of the college (*magister*), and that the type of sacrificial animal was linked to the gender of the addressee. The order of sacrifice reveals the hierarchy among both gods and mortals: the gods receive animals first, beginning with the highest gods of the *res publica*, the Capitoline Triad (Jupiter, Juno, Minerva), then Salus Publica (the Public Welfare). Since their essence was mortal and therefore inferior to that of the immortal gods, the Acts mention next offerings addressed to mortals, first a cow to *Concordia* in honor of Agrippina Augusta (Agrippina the Younger), Nero's mother. Here, the expression *Concordia* is equivalent to the *Juno* of the empress-mother: the living force of Agrippina Augusta is honored (Scheid (2002) 525). The choice of *Concordia* instead of the usual *Juno* probably refers to the ideal of harmony between the empress-mother and Nero, and the fact that the *Genius* of Nero figures after the *Concordia* of his mother publicly manifests the good relationship between the emperor and his mother in the last year before her death. At the end of the list, a sacrifice to the *Genius* of Nero is mentioned. Thus the sacrifices performed by the *fratres Arvales* do not confirm Suetonius' assumptions about a bad relationship between Nero and his mother (*Nero* 34). The celebration of Nero's birthday seems to project an image of harmony between son and mother, an image fostered by the Senate which decreed the modalities of the ritual of the Arval Brothers.

On this occasion, the *fratres Arvales* joined in a banquet and shared among themselves the portion of meat from the sacrificial animals not offered to the gods. The gods received the *exta*, the five internal organs: the heart (*cor*), the lungs (*pulmones)*, the liver (*iecur*), the peritoneum (*omentum*, a membrane enclosing the *exta*), and the gallbladder (*fel*). The mortals, on the other hand, consumed the meat (*viscera*). The parts due to the gods and to the mortals were cooked in a pot. The divine portion was sprinkled with *mola salsa* (salted flour, ritually prepared by the Vestals) and wine, then burnt on the altar. This procedure was accompanied by a prayer explicitly stating who was making the sacrifice, who was receiving it, and who would obtain the benefits as a reward for the offering. Sacrifice in Roman religion was a means of entering a reciprocal contract. The sacrificer offered gifts to the gods and promised to give more if they would fulfill his demands. The different stages of the sacrifice also expressed the hierarchy among the gods and mortals: the gods were the first to receive their share. Only after the sacrificial offering was consumed by the flames did the sacrificer consign the rest of the victim to human consumption by touching it (Scheid (2007) 267).

On some occasions, such as the ceremony known as the *nuncupatio votorum* – a festival of public vows for the welfare of the emperor, and an important celebration in the calendar of the imperial festivals – it was not just the emperor's *Genius* that was honored through animal offerings but also his deified predecessors. The *nuncupatio votorum* was first decreed by the Roman Senate for Octavian in 30 BC, and afterwards, at the beginning of the civil year, it was performed annually by the consuls and major priests. Suetonius mentions the assistance of all ranks of citizens (senators, equestrians, and the Roman people) during a public proclamation of the vows on the Capitol (*Nero* 46.2).

In the time of Augustus and Tiberius, the fulfillment of the vows for the *res publica* taken a year before was performed on January 1, just as had been done in the Republic. On January 3, vows for the prosperity of the emperor were fulfilled and the new ones

for the coming year were pronounced. From AD 41 onwards, vows for the welfare of the emperor and for the eternal existence of the *res publica* were fulfilled together on January 1 (Pliny, *Panegyricus* 67.3.5). This ceremony was performed by both consuls and high priestly colleges in the name of the Senate and the Roman people. The fusion of the fulfillment of the vows for the *res publica* and for the emperor in the same ritual expressed the idea that the prosperity of the political community had become closely connected with the well-being of the emperor. The new vows for the forthcoming year (*nuncupatio votorum*) were formulated on January 3 (for discussion of the texts revealing the change of these dates, see Scheid (1990) 306–9). On the same day, the *fratres Arvales* also performed the *nuncupatio votorum* in their own name. On January 3, the Arvals offered sacrifices for the welfare of the emperor and for the empire on the Capitol.

See, for example, the commemoration in the Acts of the fulfillment and pronouncement of the new vows on January 3, AD 59:

> C. Vipstano Aproniano, (vacat)
>
> C. Fonteio Capitone (vacat) co(n)s(ulibus)
>
> (vacat) (ante diem tertium) (vacat) non(as) (vacat) Ianuar(ias) (vacat)
>
> L. Piso L. f(ilius) magister conlegii fratrum arualium nomine vota nuncupauit pro salute Neronis Claudi, diui Claudi fili, Germanici Caesaris n(epotis), Ti(berii) Caesaris Aug(usti) pron(epotis), diui Aug(usti) abnepotis, Caesaris Aug(usti) Germanici, pontificis maximi, trib(unicia) pot(estate) (quinta), imp(eratoris) (sextum), co(n)s(ulis) (tertium), design(ati) (quartum), et Octauiae coniugis eius uictimis immolatis in Capitolio, quae superioris anni magister uouerat, persoluit et in proximum annum nuncupauit, praeeunte C. Vipstano Aproniano co(n)s(ule) in eadem uerba, quae infra scripta sunt: Ioui <boues> mares (duos), Iunoni uaccas (duas), Mineruae uacc(as) (duas), Saluti publicae uaccas [(duas),] in templo nouo diuo Aug(usto) boues mares (duos), diuae Aug(ustae) uaccas (duas), diuo Claudio boues m(ares) (duos) . . . (*Commentarii Fratrum Arvalium*: Scheid (1998) 27, lines 35–45)
>
> During the consulate of Caius Vipstanus Apronianus and Caius Fonteius Capito, on the third day before the Nones of January, the head of the college Lucius Piso, son of Lucius, pronounced in the name of the college of the Arval Brothers vows for the welfare of Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus, the son of Divus Claudius, grandson of Germanicus Caesar, the great grandson of Tiberius Caesar Augustus, great great grandson of Divus Augustus, *pontifex maximus*, granted tribunicial power for the fifth time, *imperator* for the sixth time, consul for the third time, elected to the consular office for the fourth time, and to his wife Octavia. By sacrificing victims on the Capitol he fulfilled the vows which the head of the college (*magister*) of the last year had taken, and pronounced the new ones for the coming year. The consul Caius Vipstanus Apronianus dictated to him the prayer in the same words which are written below: to Jupiter two male oxen, to Juno two cows, to Minerva two cows, to Salus Publica [two] cows, at the new Temple of Divus Augustus two oxen, to Diva Augusta two cows, to Divus Claudius two oxen . . .

This text is one of several surviving inscriptions which give detailed information about the annual ritual vows on January 3. First, the exact year of the ritual is mentioned, then the head of the Arvals who acted as sacrificer. In the example above the vows were formulated for the welfare (which encompassed health as well as prosperity) of the emperor and his wife, Octavia. In this ritual context, Nero's priestly office seems to be

more important than his public offices: the nomenclature puts his highest priestly office as *pontifex maximus* first and only then mentions his public offices. Nero's divine genealogy is recorded, with deified predecessors in the office of emperor back to Augustus. Then the inscription indicates the main acts of the ritual procedure. First, the vows of the last year are fulfilled (*vota persolvere*) as the *magister* of the Arval Brothers sacrifices the victims promised by his predecessor on January 3 the previous year on the Capitol. This sacrifice demonstrates a commitment that new sacrifices will be offered, provided that the gods protect the welfare of the emperor and his wife. Then, a public proclamation of the vows for the health and prosperity of the emperor and the empress in the coming year takes place.

An important part of this *nuncupatio votorum* was the prayer. The text of the inscription stresses that it was the consul Vipstanus Apronianus who recited the prayer formula, which the head of the Arval Brothers then repeated. Ancient texts refer to this kind of *verba praeire* as a usual procedure in religious practice (se e.g. Livy 9.46.6). The traditional prayer specifies to which deities animals should be sacrificed on the Capitol (Jupiter, Juno, Minerva, Salus Publica). Further, the prayer implies a change of place for sacrifice to the defied emperors, for the Arvals went to the Palatine to offer sacrifices to Divus Augustus and his wife, as well as to Divus Claudius, at the new Temple.

It is interesting that not only the major gods of the *res publica* but also the deified emperors received offerings to preserve the welfare of the emperor and his current wife. This seems to be an expression of Nero's attachment to his family, for the deified emperors are asked to take care of the living ruler. The deified members of Nero's family as well as his biological father and his mother were worshipped by annual festivals of the *fratres Arvales*. At the Augustalia (October 12), they offered animals to Divus Augustus and Diva Augusta at the new Temple of Divus Augustus on the Palatine. The first Roman emperor, his wife, and Divus Claudius were venerated with animal sacrifices at a festival celebrating Nero's *imperium* (assumption of military and civil power on October 13: see Scheid (1998) 27, lines 9–14). Nero's pious attachment to his father by adoption, Divus Claudius, was celebrated by a special festival: the Arval Brothers offered animals to the Capitoline Triad and Salus Publica on February 25 to commemorate Nero's adoption (Scheid (1998), 26, lines 28–9). It is difficult to evaluate the historicity of Suetonius' report that Agrippina the Younger started to build a temple to Divus Claudius, which Nero then apparently dismantled to build his Golden House (*Vespasian* 9: see Beste and von Hesberg in this volume), but we know that the ritual honors paid to Nero's adoptive father by the Arvals reveal due veneration of the Divus Claudius. On the anniversary of the birthday of Nero's mother, Agrippina Augusta, the Arval Brothers offered animals to the Capitoline Triad, the Salus Publica, and to her *Concordia* (Scheid (1998), 27, lines 15–18). The Arval Brothers commemorated Nero's dead father, Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus, on December 11, but in this case the festival was not as solemn as the birthday of the mother empress, for the sacrifices were offered in front of the house of the Domitii on the Via Sacra, not at the temple of the most important gods of the *res publica* on the Capitol (Scheid (1998) 27, lines 24–5). Thus the Arvals also commemorated Nero's non-deified biological father, but on a much lesser scale than the birthday of the living mother empress was celebrated (Scheid (2002) 520).

The Arval Brothers then celebrated several annual festivals for Nero's dead relatives as well as the living force (*Juno*, *Concordia*) of the female members of Nero's family.

What do the Acts of the rites performed by the Arval Brothers tell us about the religious policy of the Senate? The festivals celebrated in honor of Nero's relatives referred to the traditional Roman virtue of *pietas*, loyalty towards gods and relatives, which was a major theme of the religious policy of the emperor Augustus. Octavian became a son of a god (*Divi filius*) when his adoptive father Julius Caesar was deified in 42 BC and he afterwards displayed his *pietas* towards him (for instance, by building the Temple of Mars Ultor). After Claudius' death the Senate granted to his widow Agrippina the Younger a priesthood of her deified husband and a pair of lictors who accompanied her when performing priestly duties as *flaminica* (priestess) of Divus Claudius (Tacitus, *Annals*, 13.2.15; Rüpke (2005) 746; Hemelrijk (2007) 319; Gradel (2007)). This religious office was preceded by the widow of Augustus, Livia, who was given after her late husband's deification the title Julia Augusta and became a priestess of *Divus Augusti*, responsible for the public cult of the new *Divus* (Rüpke (2005) 1113–4). In public religion during the reign of Nero rituals and new religious offices thus continued to express the ideals of the first Roman emperor.

Emperor Cult outside Rome

Roman colonies and municipalities mirrored the religious institutions of Rome. A document akin to a foundation charter of *colonia* Urso (now Osuna) in Spain prescribed not only the existence of the highest political office of the *duoviri* (two men), which corresponded to the consuls in Rome, but also two priestly groups, pontiffs and augurs, as in Rome (*Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* (*ILS*) 6087, 64–7). In addition to this similarly in political and religious organization, the Roman colonies and municipalities were encouraged to celebrate some festivals of Rome, especially the festivals of imperial veneration. In the provinces, governors rendered religious honors to the emperor in the presence of local magistrates and priests (Fishwick (1991) 90). But ceremonies on behalf of the emperor in Rome differed from ritual honors paid to him and his family in Italy and the rest of the Roman empire. The main difference was that in Rome only the *Genius* of the emperor was worshipped, whereas outside Rome the emperor himself was worshipped as a god (Fishwick (1991) 91; Gradel (2002) 81): Gradel ((2002) 234–50) argues convincingly that the cult of the emperor's *numen* (divine force) was a synonym for the cult of the emperor as a god. In Greece and Asia municipal cult included the deified Roman emperors and the living ruler.

The emperor cult outside Rome was thus a combination of traditional local rituals and new impulses. Many imperial anniversaries were celebrated in western as well as in the eastern provinces, but the selection and way of veneration differed locally (Fishwick (1991) 482–92). Municipalities were free to choose which festivals of the imperial household they would celebrate and in which ways to pay honor to the imperial family (Fishwick (1991) 91). The rituals of ruler cult varied from simple forms of veneration like *supplicationes* (thanksgiving by offering incense and wine) to sacrifices of animals and banquets. Nero was honored in the Greek city Acraephia as "the new Sun-god shining on the Greeks" because he granted autonomy to the province of Achaia and his statues were placed in the temples of Zeus Eleutherios and Apollo Ptoos (*Inscriptiones Graecae* (*IG*) VII 2713; Ferguson (1970) 46; Cancik-Hitzl (2003); see Mratschek in

this volume). Local Athenian officials honored Nero by putting his name across the architrave of the Parthenon (Price (1984) 149).

Literary Representations of the Dichotomy Religion/Superstition

In ancient Rome, religion was embedded in all areas of life and was intertwined with its political, social, and economic aspects. In many literary texts religion plays a particular role: gods and their worship were an everyday concern and therefore a powerful signifier for the Roman reader. Rituals were usually only referred to in literature and are rarely described in detail. The reason for this allusive character is that knowledge about the performance of rituals was passed on orally from generation to generation. A comprehensive study of literary representations of religion in the age of Nero does not yet exist. Nevertheless, such a study would certainly provide essential information about changes in religious phenomena in comparison to the far better studied age of Augustus (see, e.g., Feeney (1998)). An important issue of religious debates in the literature of Nero's time was the concept of *superstitio* (false religion). After a short introduction to Nero's condemnation of adherents of foreign and false religion, I will discuss literary representations of this phenomenon.

The persecution of Jews and Christians took place in moments of crisis in Rome. Adherents of foreign religions were seen as a threat to the Roman order: they were therefore executed or expelled from the city. In the Republic, the Roman senate banished astrologers and Greek philosophers from Rome (e.g. Valerius Maximus 1.3.3; Suetonius, *On Grammarians* 25.1). Worshippers of foreign gods seemed to endanger the political order by teaching non-traditional attitudes and values. In AD 19, the emperor Tiberius expelled worshippers of the so-called Egyptian goddess Isis as well as Jews from Rome (Tacitus *Annals*, 2.85.10). Nero also persecuted foreign *superstitio*: in this context the executions of apostles in Rome took place. In AD 64 Nero put the apostle Paul on trial and condemned him, and he had the apostle Peter executed as well (*Acts of Apostles* 16.19–24). By applying this motive for persecution Nero acted in the role of the emperor who seeks to preserve the traditional religion. Nevertheless, these deeds gave rise to a Christian tradition of portraying Nero as a wicked tyrant and immoral persecutor (see Maier in this volume).

Superstitio was a term employed from the beginnings of Latin literature in philosophical and rationalizing reflection on Roman religion. Typically, authors defend a neat opposition between religion and superstition (Varro, *Divine Antiquities* (*Antiquitates Rerum Humanarum et Divinarum*) fr. 47 (Cardauns); Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods*, 2.71–2; *On the Laws* 2.40). In discourse on the worship of the gods, the term *religio* bears positive connotations, whereas *superstitio* refers to false or exaggerated ritual practice. *Religio* also stands for elite religion: *superstitio* is depicted as the ritual practice of the uneducated and particularly old women (Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods*, 2.28.70; Gordon (1990) 237–8, 255). This dichotomy is explored further in Seneca's *De superstitione* (*On* "*Superstition*"), in which he criticizes the ritual practices of cults labeled as "foreign" (e.g. Egyptian or Phrygian) for their exaggerated and therefore superstitious nature. The full text of Seneca's essay is now lost, but the church

father Augustine has transmitted excerpts: in one such fragment, Seneca attacks the excessive emotions of the "Egyptian" cult of Isis on display at her shrine on the Capitol. Seneca especially ridicules the rituals performed during the *Isia* between October 28 and November 3, which re-enacted the myth of the goddess Isis who searched for her dead lover or husband Osiris and mourned him (Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris*, 15–18).

The celebrants of the so-called Egyptian rituals enacted this myth, but we do not know exactly how. Turcan (2001) 122 and Alvar (2008) 301 assert that the cult of Isis contained elements of ritual staging, but the literary evidence does not directly support these assumptions about dramatic performances. Seneca writes that the celebrants first mourned for Osiris, then rejoiced at his discovery. He stresses the fictive side of these ritual practices: although the celebrants only feign the loss and recovery of Osiris, they mourn his disappearance and rejoice when he is symbolically "found" (Augustine, *City of God*, 6.10). Seneca as philosopher is indignant at excessive emotions which contradict the norms of "upper-class" religious attitudes: a kind of religiosity encompassing primarily the correct performance of public rites, in which the personal feelings or emotions of the protagonist should not play any role (on such Stoic control, see, e.g., Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 19.1; Borgeaud (2006) 215; Mannering, Bryan in this volume). Seneca recommends that we *observe* the customs of the cult, but without any inner commitment: to distance oneself from emotion in ritual, to act "as if" (*fingere*), should be limit of participation in ritual mourning or rejoicing for a member of the Roman elite. Christian writers, too, mention ritual gestures of mourning: but this does not necessarily show that mythic sequences were acted out (see Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 23.1; Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 1.13; Lactantius, *Divine Institutes* 1.21.20). The mourning of Osiris and the joy at his recovery were probably referenced by gestures of mourning and shouts of joy only. Seneca shows that each worshipper could individually decide how to express emotions in ritual. Some mourned Osiris excessively beating their breasts and arms until blood flowed. Others preferred more reserved ritual gestures and displayed more subdued signs of sorrow, avoiding any ecstatic performances of mourning or joy.

Seneca's passage about the cult of Isis highlights one important development in the religion of imperial Rome. In the reign of Caligula the rituals of Isis were first added to the calendar of public festivals (Wissowa (1912) 354; Turcan (1998) 123) and her cult seems to be widespread in Nero's time. In the *Apocolocyntosis*, Seneca has the crowd which sees Claudius coming shouting "We have found him, let us rejoice together"! (13) This ritual formula, which parodically reworks the words at the finding of Osiris, is exclaimed in Greek: a sign not only of the Greek provenance of the cult of Isis, but also its status as "common knowledge," for Seneca uses it without further explanation. Yet although the *Isia* were a public festival, the cult and its priests were frequently denigrated in imperial literature. Suetonius reports how the emperor Domitian, during the conflict with Vitellius, escaped his persecutors by hiding himself in the temple of Isis on the Capitol and by dressing up as a worshipper of Isis (*Domitian* 1). Suetonius depicts Domitian seeking camouflage among the sacrificers of various superstitions (*sacrificulos variae superstitionis*) which must have included the Isis cult: not a flattering depiction, especially given the use of the term *superstitio*, implying wrong, excessive, and not gentleman-like religious practice.

Although Isis festivals figured on the calendar of public festivals of Rome public priests did not participate in the cult. This also applied to another festival of "foreign"

provenance, the "Phrygian" rites to the goddess Cybele. Cybele, or *Magna Mater* (Great Mother) was revered as bestowing military victory, as tutelary goddess of cities and city walls, mother of gods, and the goddess who controlled the wildness of mankind (Ovid, *Fasti* 4.215–21). Modern scholars speak of a double structure – one public, performed in a Roman way, and one private, performed in a "foreign" way – in relation to the cult of Cybele (Borgeaud (1996) 96, 105). The public rites were performed by the praetor in a "Roman" way by offering a sacrifice and putting on *ludi* (games), consisting of theater performances as well as horse races. The rituals of the "Phrygian" priests (*galli*), who danced wild dances accompanied by ecstatic music, were inappropriate for members of the Roman elite. The Augustan historian Dionysius of Halicarnassus mentions an explicit law and decree of the Roman senate forbidding any native-born Roman citizen to participate in the procession of the "Phrygian" ritual, or to beg for alms in its course (*Roman Antiquities*, 2.19.4–5).

Literary evidence on the ritual washing of the statue of Cybele in the river Almo during the *lavatio* festival ("The Washing") on March 27 (Borgeaud (1996) 97–8) seems to show a major change of protagonists of the ritual after its incorporation into the public calendar by the emperor Claudius (Borgeaud (1996) 133). A priest and a priestess recruited from Roman freedmen and freedwomen were in charge of the "Phrygian" cult and performed the washing of the statue of the goddess in the river. In Augustan times the *lavatio* ritual was performed by a "Phrygian" priest (Ovid *Fasti*, 4.337–42), whom Ovid depicts as grey haired and dressed in purple clothes. The same ritual of *lavatio* seems to have been enacted by the *quindecemviri sacris faciundis* in the age of Nero. Lucan describes in the first book of his *Bellum Civile* – obviously, set in the late Republic – a ritual of lustration (*lustratio*) intended to appease the gods who have sent unfavorable signs (*prodigia*). In this ceremony public priests walked around the *pomerium*, Rome's sacred boundary, to ensure its divine protection (1.599–600), but anachronistically Lucan updates the washing of the statue of the goddess: in his text it is the *quindecemviri sacris faciundis* who do this. The active participation of the *quindecemviri sacris faciundis* in the "Phrygian" ritual of Cybele marks a major change as "Phrygian" rituals became an integral part of public religion under Claudius. But, as in the case of the Isis cult, the *galli* were still mocked by authors who denigrated rituals which did not conform to the ideal of upper-class religious attitudes (cf., e.g., Juvenal, *Satires*, 6.511–22). The term *superstitio* thus covered also all not fully accepted aspects of religion.

Lucan's *Bellum Civile* is famously an epic without gods (see Feeney (1991) 250–310; Hardie in this volume), but another significant example of the literary representation of *superstitio* is found again in Lucan's Erictho, a Thessalian witch who performs necromancy (communication with the dead) in order to receive prophecy from the underworld. Erictho seeks revelation of hidden information by perverting a funeral rite and reanimating a corpse (*Bellum Civile* 6.529–37 esp. 531–2): breaking social norms and laws, she is obviously depicted as dangerous to the social and political order. Gordon stresses that such images of witches have an ideological function in contrast to "the religious practices of the élite (sacrificial system), as rational, appropriate, coherent and effective" (Gordon (1990) 237–8). The *superstitio* of Erictho stands in stark contrast to the religion of the elite and stands for practices sanctioned by the state. Reactions against

the "wrong" kind of religion ranged from harmless mockery to brutal persecution when the Neronian political community perceived any *superstitio* as a threat.

Religion and Superstition in the *Satyrica*

Religion permeates Petronius' novel *Satyrica*: it is, therefore, a good case study for the analysis of distinctions between religion and *superstitio* in the "private" context (for more on the *Satyrica*, see Murgatroyd in this volume). This novel – attributed to Petronius, who was probably one of Nero's courtiers (cf. Tacitus, *Annals*, 16.18–19) – consists of a mixture (*satura*) of different literary genres ranging from satire to panegyric. The narrator of the text, Encolpius, as well as other characters, often makes reference to the gods and religion, and scholars have recognized that the wrath of the god Priapus is a major theme in the *Satyrica* (Richlin (2009) 92: Murgatroyd in this volume). Yet the theme of religion in the *Satyrica* has been relatively under-researched in the last few decades (see Grondona (1980); Miller (1989); Codoñer (1989)).

As so often in satirical texts, the *Satyrica* mocks human types. The main protagonist of the famous dinner party scene (26–78), for example, is Trimalchio, a man who embodies many clichés of the *nouveau riche*. Trimalchio displays his wealth by serving an extravagant dinner to his friends, most of them rich freedmen like himself. Encolpius and his friend Agamemnon figure at the banquet as parasites who praise the bizarre ideas of the host and laugh loudly at his jokes hoping that they will be invited to his party again (52.7; cf. Martial, *Epigrams* 2.27). Encolpius transgresses many norms of Roman male conduct: he is effeminate, devoted to his darling boy Giton, and gets involved in dubious mystery rituals and magical rites which are supposed to cure his impotence. Trimalchio's dinner party serves as an example of bad taste, superstition, and bad education which contrasts with *paideia*, the positive model of an all-encompassing education. In this light Trimalchio's off-beam religious attitude is only one of several features which reveal his lack of *paideia*.

Trimalchio is depicted as *sevir Augustalis*, a holder of religious office in the cult of the emperor. The office of *seviri* (six men) or *magistri Augustales* in Roman colonies and municipalities was comparable to the *vicomagistri* (heads of city quarters), who performed rituals at the altars of the *lares Augustales* placed on the crossroads (*vici*) on the behalf of the emperor's *Genius* in Rome (Nock (1972); Gradel (2002) 116–28). The holders of this lower religious office who served the cult of the emperor were social climbers, usually freedmen, rarely the freeborn. The *Augustales* in Roman colonies and municipalities built their own assembly halls and treasuries, erected statues, renewed altars and temples, sponsored games, and supported public works (Fishwick (1991) 610–16).

Trimalchio's performance of a libation to the *lares* and to the *Genius* of the emperor during the dinner has comic and parodic effects. As Miller (1989) argues convincingly, this passage refers to the traditional libation at the Roman banquet offered to the *lares* and the emperor, in which the servant carries round the sacrificial bowl so each guest can pour some wine in their honor. This libation ceremony was established in 30 BC; Dio Cassius (51.19.7) mentions the senatorial decree by which Octavian, the future

Augustus, was to be revered during banquets (cf. Horace, *Odes* 4.5). We do not have any other evidence for the post-Augustan existence of this ceremony, but we may ascertain through Petronius' travesty of this traditional libation that it must have been performed during the reign of Nero. This significant passage thus confirms my thesis that many Augustan rituals were still observed in the age of Nero.

In Petronius' depiction of the scene, the rites are mixed with obscene and comic elements which make a travesty of Trimalchio's staging of imperial veneration. During the presentation of the *apophoreta* (presents which guests received during dinner to take home with them), a new course is served, a pastry figure of the god Priapus holding up a skirt filled with fruits and grapes (60.6). When the guests reach for the food, they form a line (*pompa*), a term associated in parodic manner with religious procession. Their touch causes the *placentae* (cakes) and *poma* (apples) to emit streams of saffron into their faces. (Miller (1989) 197 recognizes in this scene an obscene joke.) Persuaded that this food must be sacred and that it forms part of the emperor cult, the diners rise and say: *Augusto, patri patriae, feliciter*, "Hail to Augustus, Father of the Fatherland" (60.7). As Encolpius sees that the other guests snatch the fruit immediately after this honoration, he is also eager to fill his napkin with apples, gifts for his favorite boy Giton. Meanwhile the ceremony continues. Two servants dressed in festive white tunics position the images of two *lares* on the table, whereas the third carries around the sacrificial bowl (*patera*) and cries *dii propitii*, "May the gods be propitious!" (60.8). The guests then revere the *lares* and the golden image of the *Genius* of Trimalchio by kissing them. The fact that Encolpius feels obliged to kiss the statuette of Trimalchio's *Genius* reveals another outrageous feature of this *mise en scène* of veneration of the emperor. The kissing of the statue was an unusual and most extravagant form of worship. By attributing this exceptional form of worship to the *lares* and the *Genius* of Trimalchio the ritual turns into a parodic travesty of the everyday custom of worshipping the emperor during a meal.

In addition, further rituals and rites are also depicted as a travesty or a *superstitio* in the *Satyrica*. Trimalchio pretends to be dead and demands to be mourned and indeed, funeral music is played (78.4; see Hope (2009)). The rituals for Priapus conducted by Quartilla are secret nocturnal rites (*nocturnas religiones*) which should not be looked upon by those uninitiated without punishment (17.4–8). This implies secret initiation, but Quartilla's nocturnal rites (21: *Priapi genio pervigilium*) turn out to be sexual orgies (cf. Blanshard (2010); Murgatroyd in this volume). Indeed, ancient writers insist that nocturnal rites of men and women endanger their chastity and facilitate illicit sexuality: fantasies of sexual debauchery during such rituals are a literary *topos.* Cicero justifies a prohibition of women's nocturnal sacrifices in his *De Legibus* ("On the Laws") by a reference to this stereotype in comedy (2.21: for illicit sexual activities during a nocturnal religious festival cf. Plautus, *Aulularia* 36). In this vein Quartilla's nocturnal rites for Priapus are only a pretext to implicate Encolpius and his friends in sexual adventures. Customarily, however, propagating the stereotype of sexual debauchery during nocturnal religious festivals is a way of proclaiming upper-class morality according to which such rites were a *superstitio* and showcased false religion (see Livy 39.13.11; Šterbenc Erker forthcoming). In the *Satyrica*, we thus find not only parodic versions of "correct" ritual, but also the misconceptions of the Roman elite about the superstitious beliefs of lower social strata.

Conclusion

As we have seen, despite the hostile later historical record, in the reign of Nero Julio-Claudian religious practice was conducted as usual. The evidence of the Acts of the Arval Brothers shows that Nero continued to stress associations of family, while emperor cult lent expression to the idea that the prosperity of the political community was closely connected with the well-being of the emperor. In the provinces, new communities built religious organization around the model of Rome, and in both east and west they worshipped not only the deified emperors but also the living ruler, integrating veneration of Nero with traditional home-grown religious practices. In contemporary literary evidence, discourse on right and wrong religious attitudes dominates. This probably reflects the historical importance of differentiation among traditional Roman and foreign religion: while the cults of Isis and Cybele were integrated into the public calendar, their priests were denigrated by moralizing authors, and a major methodological problem in the interpretation of representations of ''foreign'' cults in literature is that some scholars do not take these moralistic intentions into account. In both satire and philosophy displays of excessive emotion in rituals were mocked, and other practices (such as magic and superstition) are assumed to constitute religious deviation. Moralizing elite views on religious phenomena (*superstitio* and ''foreign'' cults or nocturnal mystery rites) should not be taken at face value. Authors proclaiming such moral norms do not accurately describe religious life but aim to demonstrate the negative attitude of the Roman elite towards some ritual practices, and even the potential endangerment of Rome's own political community.

FURTHER READING

The papers in Croisille and Perrin (2002) treat different aspects of the political, economic, social, intellectual, artistic, and religious life in the age of Nero. A useful analysis of the Acts of the Arval Brothers (ed. Scheid 1998), which gives insight into the modalities of the ruler cult in Rome, is Scheid (1990), and for the rituals of the Arval Brothers during the reign of Nero, see Scheid (2002). For the calendar of the ceremonies, see Herz (1975) and Herz (1978), and for information on prosopography of the public priests, see Rüpke (2008). Fishwick (1987–2005) gathers evidence on emperor cult in the western empire and briefly discusses sources on the cult of Nero or his *Genius*. Gradel's (2002) analysis of emperor worship provides a methodologically sound study of concepts and practices of emperor cult in the context of religion in Rome and Italy. Several papers in Cancik and Hitzl (2003) discuss the identification of Nero with Zeus Eleutherios in Greece and emperor cult in general; see Price (1984) for emperor cult in Asia Minor.

There is no comprehensive study on religious phenomena in literature in Nero's reign but several articles treat its various aspects. Gordon (1990) gives an analysis of the norms and values transmitted by the term *superstitio*. Beard, North, and Price (1998) provide a general introduction to the study of the ''foreign'' cults of Rome and the denigration strategies of authors who advance ideas of what is Roman and non-Roman. Turcan (2001) and Alvar (2008) present the sources on the myths and rituals in the cults of Isis and Cybele (though they pay no attention to the difference between myth and ritual). Borgeaud (1996) provides a convincing study on Cybele; (Borgeaud 2006) is an important analysis of emotions in ancient rites, demonstrating that in Rome rituals generated and controlled emotions in the religious sphere.

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CHAPTER 8

Neronian Philosophy

Jenny Bryan

Introduction

Whilst it is relatively easy to find generalizations about "Roman philosophy" or even "imperial philosophy," it is more or less unheard of for anyone to talk of "Neronian philosophy." We have a great deal of philosophical writing from this period, but almost all of it is by one author, Seneca, and, as a result, characterizations of philosophy under Nero tend to be generalizations about Seneca. However, we do have textual evidence for two other philosophers active at this time, Cornutus and Musonius Rufus, and, together with Seneca, they provide intriguing evidence for the different ways in which philosophical thinking may have been influenced by or itself had an influence on Neronian Rome.

Of course, insofar as the philosophers active in Nero's reign fall within the class of "imperial philosophers," they are characterized in much the same way. In fact, the extensive nature of Seneca's corpus, the largest of any Stoic from antiquity, means that many of those generalizations about Roman philosophy are derived primarily from his writings. According to the standard line, philosophy in the empire is dominated by Stoicism, focused on ethics at the expense of the other branches of philosophy, and lacking in doctrinal innovation. It is also said to demonstrate a tendency towards "eclecticism," so that even those signing up as Stoics are not shy to borrow elements of doctrine from rival schools as and when it suits.

Founded in the third century BC and taking its name from the Painted Stoa (*stoa poikilē*) in the Athenian agora where its adherents would gather, the Stoic school presents a system of philosophy under three main headings: physics, logic, and ethics. At the heart of Stoic physics is their conception of a materialist universe in which god (sometimes referred to as "fire" or "*logos*") is immanent as the active principle imposing order and

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purpose on the passive principle of matter. Stoic logic has a much broader scope than its modern namesake, incorporating not only impressive innovations in the study of arguments but also, among other things, grammar, rhetoric, and epistemology. Their ethics promotes the idea of living in accordance with nature, setting up virtue as the only true good in life and demoting everything else to which we might typically assign the label "good" to a class of "indifferents." The Stoics accept that some indifferents, such as health or wealth, are preferable to others, such as illness or poverty, but insist that virtue is in itself necessary and sufficient for happiness. A recurrent feature of Stoic ethical writings is the figure of the "sage," the man who, having achieved virtue and thus true happiness, is an idealized and unerring example of how to live one's life.

Cornutus, Musonius Rufus, and Seneca are all Stoics. Stoicism seems to have exercised a particular appeal on (middle- and upper-class) Romans and it became the most prominent of the major philosophical schools in the early empire, outdoing rivals such as the Epicureans or Academics. Several factors may have contributed to this popularity. It is plausible that the Stoic focus on virtue as the only thing of value offered something like an intellectual refuge from the moral uncertainty and political capriciousness of the early empire. Perhaps more prosaically, the Stoic emphasis on moral rectitude can be seen to dovetail relatively neatly with Roman sensibilities (Griffin (1989) 8).

One particularly significant factor in Stoicism's appeal among the upper classes may be its attitude towards political activity. Evidence for early Stoic views on politics is relatively scarce (what we know about early Stoicism in general is derived from fragments of the early Stoics preserved in much later sources and from the discussions of those later authors themselves) but they do seem to have allowed for and even encouraged political engagement (*Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* 3.686). This is in contrast both to the Epicureans, who advocate complete withdrawal from politics, and to the relatively common depiction of philosophers (including Stoics) as disengaged from civic life. This latter perception may have been encouraged by figures such as Quintus Sextius, the Roman founder of a sect combining Pythagoreanism and Stoicism, who was said to have refused Julius Caesar's offer of political advancement (Seneca, *Epistulae* xcviii.13). Nevertheless, Stoicism allowed a high-born Roman to affiliate himself to a Greek philosophical school without compromising his social status or, indeed, his Roman identity. This combination of political engagement and Stoicism is personified in figures such as Cato the Younger (95–46 BC) and the Stoic emperor Marcus Aurelius (AD 222–35). In the reign of Nero, it is most obviously identifiable in the life of Seneca (although much of what he has to say about political engagement seems at odds with his own activities – see below).

Although Stoicism dominates imperial and thus Neronian philosophy, it would be a mistake to suppose that its rival schools are entirely defunct. Whilst there may be no Epicurean equivalent of Seneca (or indeed Lucretius) in this period, Epicureanism is clearly a significant presence in the Roman philosophical landscape (see Erler (2009) for an account of the school's fortunes under the empire). So, for example, Seneca peppers his writings with references to and, indeed, praise of Epicurus. Plutarch, writing in the period just after Nero, evidently regards Epicureanism as a worthwhile target for extensive criticism. As a Platonist, Plutarch himself is proof of the endurance of interest in Platonic philosophy throughout the first century AD. Although the evidence is relatively scarce, there is good reason to think that both Aristotelianism and Pyrrhonian skepticism

maintained some kind of presence throughout the first century AD. Cynicism, which shares certain similarities with Stoicism, was also enjoying something of a revival in this period, as demonstrated by Seneca's approval of Demetrius (*De Beneficiis* 7; see Goulet-Cazé (1990) for an account of Cynicism under the Principate).

If Stoicism is the dominant philosophy under Nero, then ethics is clearly the topic that dominates philosophical writing in this period. The vast majority of Seneca's philosophical works are concerned with *practical* ethics, i.e. with how to *live* a good life, as are the speeches attributed to Musonius Rufus. In fact, this ethical emphasis has its origins in the first and second centuries BC, when figures from the so-called Middle Stoa such as Panaetius had begun to shift their attention away from the activities and attitudes of the ideal sage towards those of the average individual *trying* to be good. This rather more pragmatic approach to virtue is perhaps another factor in Stoicism's Roman appeal (Kaster and Nussbaum (2010) x). It allows Roman Stoic authors to offer guidance directly relevant to the everyday lives of their contemporaries, including that substantial part of their lives engaged in politics. It is worth noting that this move is not a doctrinal innovation as such, i.e. it is not a rejection of Stoic orthodoxy, but rather a pragmatic shift of emphasis from the ideal to the everyday. It is also important to remember that, whilst ethics is clearly dominant in this period, physics and logic have not fallen completely by the wayside. Seneca's writings include the *Natural Questions*, properly classified as physics (albeit with a patently ethical agenda). Seneca's derogatory comments about logic (see, for example, *Epistulae* xlv) should not be taken as indicating a complete disinterest in the subject and, in fact, suggest that it still had an appeal worth warning his young correspondent against (Barnes (1997) 12–23). Cornutus has a clear interest in theology (for the Stoics a branch of physics) and language (see below).

The prominence of practical ethics is at least partly responsible for the characterization of imperial philosophy as lacking in doctrinal innovation. In focusing on making philosophy accessible and applicable to laymen, writers such as Seneca might seem to have sacrificed the kind of dialectical nitty-gritty which had made earlier Hellenistic philosophy so dynamic and philosophically innovative. Indeed, Seneca famously expresses his distaste for such philosophical "word-games" (*Epistulae* lxxi.6). However, the representation of Roman philosophy both as primarily focused on ethics and as lacking in philosophical innovation is necessarily drawn from the extant texts. It may well be the case that figures other than Seneca, perhaps even Cornutus and Musonius Rufus, did produce work more in keeping with the philosophical interests and developments of their predecessors but that those works are now lost.

As with the interest in practical ethics, the apparent eclecticism of philosophy in this period can be traced back to the Middle Stoa. Panaetius had remained head of the Stoa whilst incorporating elements of Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy (Sedley (2003) 20–4). Seneca's enthusiasm for introducing titbits of Epicureanism is perhaps somewhat more surprising and it is worth noting just how often Seneca defends this practice, most notably with his claim that he is passing into the enemy's camp "not as a deserter, but as a scout" (*Epistulae* ii.5). In fact, it is not clear that identifying oneself as Stoic at this period requires an uncritical adoption of Stoic orthodoxy or, indeed, that this kind of uncritical acceptance was ever required – Stoics seem to have been disagreeing with one another since the school's beginning. As Seneca himself points out, he is perhaps not unusual in asserting his Stoic credentials whilst criticizing orthodox doctrine (*Epistulae* cxiii.23).

Stoicism in Nero's Rome is perhaps better known for its influence on the literature of the period than in its own right (on this influence, see Gill (2003) 56–8 and Lapidge (1989)). Its direct influence on politics is harder to gauge. It has been suggested that there was something like a "Stoic opposition" to Nero and, without doubt, several figures prominent in Tacitus for their troublemaking, such as Rubellius Plautus and Helvidius Priscus, are explicitly identified as Stoics. But the degree to which Stoicism provided the ideology for opposition to Nero, or the Principate in general, is questionable (Griffin (1989) and Brunt (1975)). Emperors prior to Nero had Stoics in their courts, such as Athenodorus under Augustus, and, just as Stoicism was compatible with political activity, so it could be claimed to be amenable to monarchy (Braund (2009) 64–6). It seems perfectly plausible that someone like Helvidius Priscus would have been a thorn in Nero's (and later Vespasian's) side whether or not he made reference to Stoic doctrine, although his Stoic identity no doubt bolstered his obstreperousness.

Each of the three most prominent philosophers of this period, Cornutus, Musonius Rufus, and Seneca, exercises some influence on Neronian culture as we understand it, but each achieves this in a significantly different way.

Cornutus

Perhaps born in Leptis in modern Libya, Lucius Annaeus Cornutus taught and made his reputation in Rome. Some have seen a possible connection to Seneca's family in the "Annaeus" (Morford (2002) 192–3). Whether or not such a prior connection existed (and there is no substantial evidence to suggest that it did), Cornutus certainly was acquainted with Seneca's nephew, Lucan, who was one of his students. Whilst Cornutus is now little known beyond the narrow field of specialists in late Stoicism, his reputation in antiquity was somewhat more impressive. This was due, in large part, to his influence on another of his pupils, Persius, whose fifth *Satire* is dedicated to his teacher and describes his experience with Cornutus. According to Dio Cassius (*Historia Romana* 62.29), Cornutus was "famed for his learning" and was banished by Nero for expressing skepticism about the emperor's plan to write an extensive epic poem. Aulus Gellius also testifies to Cornutus' authority in many areas (whilst worrying that some of his comments on Vergil are "utterly silly and odious") (*Noctes Atticae* 9.10.5–6; see also 2.6.1)).

Modern scholars have found it difficult to square Cornutus' illustrious reputation and influence with the extant remains of his philosophical writings (Most (1989) 2015). He appears to have written on a broad range of topics surrounding grammar and rhetoric and we are told that his writing included works entitled "On Figurative Language" and "On Pronunciation," as well as works on rhetoric and Aristotle's *Categories*. Only one complete text remains, his "Summary of the Traditions of Greek Theology" (*epidromē tōn kata tēn hellēnikēn theologian paradedomenōn*). This text has the distinction of being one of the earliest complete Stoic treatises to survive from antiquity, but some have suggested that this is the *only* mark of distinction for what has been described as a "tedious little book on Stoic theology" (Barnes (1997) 5).

The "Summary" is a school textbook written in Greek for young men embarking on their philosophical education. It is generally cited as an example of the Stoic practice

of *allegoresis*, whereby poetic works such as those of Homer and Hesiod and elements of traditional Greek religion are interpreted in such a way as to show them to be in line with Stoic physics. Recently, it has been emphasized that the ''Summary'' is less concerned with allegory as such than with etymology (Long (2003). Cornutus seeks to identify the proto-Stoic understanding of the world revealed by the traditional names of the gods transmitted via sources such as Hesiod and Homer. In fact, Cornutus' interest extends beyond the literary sources to actual cultic practices (Most (1989) 2024–5 and Boys-Stones (2007) 77).

Cornutus' work is notably lacking in technical Stoic terminology and doctrinal detail and this lack is probably the source of its poor reputation amongst scholars of ancient philosophy. However, bearing in mind its role as schoolbook, it should perhaps not be expected to offer technical or original philosophical argument, but rather accessible and engaging summarizations drawn from the work of earlier writers (Most (1989) 2031 and Boys-Stones (2007) 84). For all that it lacks explicit Stoic vocabulary, it is agreed to be orthodox in its Stoicism (Nock (1931)).

One might think that the ''Summary'' (along with Cornutus' apparent interest in logic and language) presents an obvious counterexample to the claim that Stoicism in this period is almost exclusively concerned with practical ethics. After all, since the Stoic system identifies god with the active physical principle and order of the cosmos, Stoic theology is a branch of physics rather than of ethics. Some may view the lack of explicit discussion of traditional Stoic ethical mainstays such as ''indifferents'' or ''appropriation'' as evidence of Cornutus' lack of interest in ethics. To do so is to overlook the fact that to educate young men in *how* to think about god and the cosmos is also to encourage and equip them to think about their own role within that cosmos. Cornutus seems to be following earlier Stoics such as Panaetius and Posidonius in making education in physics the foundation for ethical understanding (Most (1989) 2031). The ''Summary'' is explicitly a work of Stoic theology but its pedagogical aims are clearly ethical, as one might expect from a textbook aimed at impressionable young men. Recent scholarship on the ''Summary'' has sought to draw out this ethical motivation in a variety of ways.

In what remains one of the most significant and extensive articles on Cornutus, Glenn Most points to the explicit concern with matters of education demonstrated by frequent interjections within the ''Summary'' (Most (1989) 2029–33). So, for example, Cornutus takes the time to warn his pupil of the dangers of drink (30.60.4–9) and to emphasize the importance of study (14.14.5–7). The ''Summary'' is designed to prepare and direct its young audience both via its introduction to Stoic doctrine and via its general exhortations to behave well and straighten out one's priorities (a point which is, in itself, properly Stoic).

Most goes on to suggest the possibility of reading the ''Summary'' as politically engaged (2034–43). Noting clear similarities between Nero's self-styled Apollonianism and Cornutus' treatment of Apollo (32), he suggests possible connections between Cornutus' text and Neronian ideology. Whilst Most does not go so far as to suggest that the ''Summary'' itself was read by Nero, he does propose that it may be representative of the kind of writing to which Nero may have turned to find ''Stoicism's warrant for his behaviour'' (2039). Then again, pointing to Cornutus' connection to the dissident poet Lucan, Most registers the possibility that this emphasis on Nero's Apollonian pretensions can just as well be read as implicitly critical of the emperor. In truth, it is difficult to

establish either propaganda or subversion in Cornutus' schoolbook, but such readings make a brave attempt both to approach Cornutus as a man of his time and to seek out some justification for his impressive reputation in antiquity.

More recently, George Boys-Stones has offered a reading of the "Summary" as politically engaged at least to the extent that it encourages its young readers to reflect in particular on the "context of their political lives" (Boys-Stones (2007) 79). On this interpretation, Cornutus is involved in a sophisticated pedagogical endeavor with orthodox Stoic ethical intentions. On the one hand, Cornutus offers a deconstruction of traditional Greek myth with the aim of demonstrating the degree to which it is a product of its culture. On the other hand, he encourages the student to reflect on the correct way to employ reason to approach and scrutinize his own contemporary culture. Whilst this reading does not attempt to draw explicit links between the "Summary" and Neronian ideology, it does suggest that Cornutus is very much in the business of equipping his students for active political life. As Boys-Stones puts it, "Cornutus' exegesis of mythology just *is* political commentary" (Boys-Stones (2007) 80).

Such efforts at reading Cornutus' "Summary" as politicized or potentially politicizing are attractive attempts to find the substance behind Cornutus' reputation. These attempts will, of course, always be limited by their lack of access to texts other than the "Summary." In fact, it seems that Cornutus' reputation is founded in the main on his literary credentials, i.e. in his connections to poets such as Persius and Lucan (see Most (1989) 2043–59) and his writing on poetry, as demonstrated by the comments of Aulus Gellius cited above. His exile by Nero is linked to his literary expertise and he has even been touted as a possible author of the pseudo-Senecan *Octavia* (2044). Cornutus is, in a sense, the philosopher of the Neronian poets.

Musonius Rufus

The Etruscan *eques*, Musonius Rufus, plays a minor role in Tacitus' *Annals*. There he appears as the philosophy teacher of Rubellius Plautus who, having been touted as a potential rival to Nero, was exiled to Asia in AD 60. It seems that Musonius followed Rubellius into exile (*Annals* 14.59) but he must have returned to Rome following Plautus' death, because he is named amongst those banished in 65 in the wake of the Pisonian conspiracy. Tacitus tells us that Musonius was one of those exiled for his renown (*claritudo nominis*) and points to his activity as a philosophical teacher as the source of this reputation (*Annals* 15.71). Recalled under Galba, Musonius seems to have dodged the banishment of philosophers under Vespasian in 71 but was then exiled again before being recalled by Titus.

Musonius certainly does seem to have been involved in politics, albeit in a qualified fashion. His connection to Plautus is presented as that between philosophy teacher and pupil and, although we are told that he was involved in peace negotiations during the civil war, Tacitus dwells on Musonius' unsuccessful attempts to persuade the troops of the "blessings of peace and the perils of war," sentiments provoking only scorn, boredom, and antagonism (*Histories* 3.81). Tacitus also records Musonius' impeachment of Publius Egnatius Celer for perjury (*Histories* 4.10). Celer was a Stoic who had testified against another Stoic, Barea Soranus, whom Nero had put to death (*Annals* 16.21). So whilst

Musonius did move in political circles he seems to have been disengaged enough, at least at the right times, to survive the fluctuations and machinations during Nero's reign and beyond. It is tempting to suggest that his comparatively unthreatening identity as a professional teacher of philosophy, with the concomitant charges of impracticality, both ensured his longevity and enhanced his philosophical reputation in later generations.

What we know of Musonius' philosophy is derived from a collection of lectures and sayings attributed to him and preserved in later authors, most extensively in Stobaeus (Lutz (1947) 146–7 gives a list of our sources for Musonius). It is often claimed that, like Socrates, Musonius wrote nothing himself and those writings we do have are the remains of collections authored by his pupils Lucius and Pollio. Equally often, although equally uncertainly, it is claimed that Musonius taught in Greek. The latter certainly seems plausible since the speeches attributed to him are in Greek, which remained the language of philosophy in this period and after, despite the efforts of Cicero and Seneca to popularize Latin philosophical writing. We can take some further evidence of Musonius' teachings from the *Discourses* (also in Greek) of his pupil, Epictetus.

In total, we have 21 discourses attributed to Musonius treating a variety of topics, from "On furnishings" to "That one should disdain hardships" to "Should daughters receive the same education as sons?" In content, they are quite clearly presented from an orthodox Stoic point of view. A recurrent theme of the discourses is the emphasis on the need to ensure the *practical* application of philosophical teaching and many of his speeches treat quite specific topics (e.g. "Will the philosopher prosecute anyone for personal injury?"). Musonius tells us that what matters is not just our ability to learn and rehearse philosophical arguments but also that we should strive to be consistently upright in our everyday behavior (see, for example, "On Training" (*Discourse* vi) 8–10). Throughout, his concern is with ethics alone and with practice more than theory. However, Epictetus does suggest that Musonius had some interest in logic (*Discourses* 1.7.30–3).

As Tacitus indicates, Musonius enjoyed a rather stellar reputation in antiquity. He is something of a pin-up for the Second Sophistic author Philostratus, who stresses Musonius' credentials as a latter-day Socrates, calling Musonius "the truest philosopher who ever was" (*Vita Apollonii* iv.46). This link to Socrates is also to be found in the third-century Christian author Origen, who cites Musonius and Socrates as "examples of the good life" (*Contra Celsum* 3.66). This parallel may have been encouraged by the fact that Musonius wrote nothing, but it is just as possible that the desire to encourage such a comparison motivated either Musonius' failure to write or the claim by his followers that he did not.

Musonius' reputation as the "Roman Socrates" has survived into modern times (Lutz (1947)). Nevertheless, as with Cornutus, some have found it hard to square the luster of his reputation in antiquity with the relatively platitudinous teachings attributed to him (Van Geytenbeek (1963) 159). Recent interest in Musonius has focused on what have been perceived as feminist leanings in his teachings. Several of his speeches seem to promote the rights and potential of women both as philosophers and as equal partners in marriage. G. E. M. De Ste. Croix indicated approval of what he perceived as Musonius' support for the emancipation of the oppressed female underclass of Rome (De Ste. Croix (1981) 110). Michel Foucault was attracted to Musonius' approach to marriage as a union between two equal partners (Foucault (1986) 150–85).

Attempts to find the truth behind Musonius' reputation in antiquity are necessarily guided by his reception in later authors, i.e. by the reputation itself. Even those teachings we attribute to him are the accounts of others filtered through the writings of yet later authors (even the teachings of Epictetus are actually recorded by Arrian). Clearly these authors found something to approve of in Musonius. Of course, it is easier to approve of a philosopher who leaves no written record of his teachings than of one who gives a detailed and careful exposition of his exact position on any topic, if only because there is nothing with which one can firmly disagree. It is certainly harder to accuse such a philosopher of hypocrisy (a charge often leveled at Seneca – see below).

Tim Whitmarsh has recently demonstrated that a central aspect of Musonius' reception is its emphasis on his Greekishness (Whitmarsh (2002) 141–55). Whitmarsh argues that the speech "That Exile is not an Evil" constructs a Greek identity for Musonius via his choice to teach in Greek, his manipulation of Greek ideas such as freedom (*eleutheria*) and freedom of speech (*parrhesia*), and his own status as an exile. This Hellenic identity is reinforced by the writings of Philostratus, which also present Musonius as the polar opposite of Nero (most notably in his short dialogue *Nero*). Philostratus' Musonius is a philosopher persecuted for his ability to transcend the petty concerns of Rome and find his place within the cosmos as a whole – his Musonius clearly is a philosophical ideal.

An alternative characterization of Musonius is that offered by Martha Nussbaum (Nussbaum (2002)). Concentrating on his writings on women, Nussbaum scrutinizes the true extent of Musonius' feminism. She demonstrates that, if his proposals with regard to the role and potential of women and the best form of marriage are considered within the context of their philosophical heritage and social background, they start to look rather less innovative and radical. We know relatively little about the political writings of the Early Stoa, the most famous of which is Zeno's *Republic*. We do have evidence, however, that Zeno made some provocative suggestions about the role of women in society. Of course, similarly provocative suggestions can also be found in Plato's *Republic*. Nussbaum suggests that Musonius takes the "radical Platonic (and perhaps Zenonian) idea of equal education and adapts it to Roman reality" (Nussbaum (2002) 292). This Musonius is rather different in character from the Hellenizing exile discussed above. He is a relatively orthodox Stoic who presents practical proposals tailored to the interests and outlook of middle-class Romans. Notably, this adaptation to Roman reality can be seen to circumscribe the extent and ambitions of Musonius' feminism. His speeches privilege the male view, addressing husbands and fathers and upholding certain assumptions about traditional gender roles within the household. Even Musonius' suggestions regarding equal union in marriage can be seen to be a slightly more ambitious development of the Roman notion of companionate marriage.

Such attempts to address the sensibilities of contemporary Rome are indicative of Musonius' general methodology. He is quite clearly in step with the shift in Stoic ethics from a concern with the ideal to a rather more pragmatic interest in what can be achieved by real, less than fully virtuous, individuals. Musonius is attempting to show contemporary Romans how they can and should aim for virtue. In doing so, it makes sense to address them in terms that they can both understand and recognize as feasible. This Musonius is a pragmatist.

So which of these two Musonii is the real thing? The question is more or less impossible to decide. Even Nussbaum's treatment of his arguments is actually a treatment

of arguments attributed to him by others. In truth, the Hellenizing Musonius and the Roman Musonius are not incompatible. There is no doubt that philosophy, even when addressed to a Roman audience, remained a predominantly Greek affair. How can we explain his illustrious reputation? He does not seem to have had any real impact on either politics or society. In fact, as Nussbaum notes, Musonius' chances of achieving any kind of substantial social change within Nero's Rome were more or less non-existent (301). He demonstrates his real significance only in the period after Nero, in his influence on the philosophy of his pupil Epictetus and thus, indirectly, on the philosophy of Epictetus' pupil Marcus Aurelius. It is perhaps this post-Neronian, explicitly philosophical legacy that accounts for his latter-day status as a Roman peer of Socrates. However, this is not to say that he lacks any influence on Neronian culture. Where his influence is most clearly identifiable, however, is in his role in the reception and construction of that culture in the Second Sophistic.

Seneca

The search for an example of specifically "Neronian" philosophy leads, inevitably, to the figure and writing of Seneca. A prolific author of explicitly philosophical texts in the form of both treatises and letters across a wide range of primarily (although not exclusively) ethical topics, Seneca dominates scholarship on the philosophy of this period. This modern interest in Seneca as philosopher is perhaps not altogether indicative of his reputation in Neronian Rome. Whilst it is clear that Seneca's philosophical interests and writings were known and read by his contemporaries, it seems that he was identified more readily as a politician or orator than as a philosopher. In AD 49, Agrippina employed Seneca as Nero's tutor, but we are told that she ruled out philosophy as subject for study "warning that it was a drawback to one who was going to rule" (Suetonius, *Nero* 52). Tacitus' depiction of Seneca certainly does reference his philosophical interests, but they are presented more as a background to his political status than as an identity in itself. In fact, Tacitus presents Seneca primarily as an orator, with the prominence of his philosophical interests and self-identification as a philosopher increasing only as Seneca's influence over Nero fades.

A popular charge against Seneca, both in antiquity and more recently, is that of hypocrisy. Dio Cassius offers an extensive list of the ways "in which his conduct was seen to be diametrically opposed to the teachings of his philosophy" (*Historia Romana* 10.2–6). For example, Seneca's writings promote the kind of austerity one might expect from a Stoic who, taking virtue to be all that matters, exhorts indifference to external matters such as health, wealth, and political power. He ends one letter with the assertion that one needs only what is essential and sufficient: "It is not the one who has too little who is poor, but the one who desires more" (*Epistulae* ii.6). Yet Seneca amassed enormous wealth during his political career. This apparent inconsistency between creed and practice did not pass unnoticed. Tacitus tells us that Seneca's wealth, in particular, was held up by his political enemies as a sign of hypocrisy (*Annals* 13.42). In fact, wealth is not incompatible with indifference to money; a good Stoic can and should bear wealth with as much equanimity as he can and should bear poverty (*Epistulae* v.6). However, whilst being wealthy may not make Seneca a bad Stoic, actively pursuing wealth would

certainly be problematic, because it would imply a lack of proper indifference. Of course, it is impossible to tell to what degree Seneca sought to amass his wealth (Griffin (2008) 54–7 surveys the evidence), but it is worth noting Tacitus' claim that Nero expressed disapproval of those who claimed austerity (*Annals* 13.18). Further, one might think that the accrual of large sums was an inevitable consequence of being *amicus principis* whether one sought wealth or not. Tacitus has Seneca making precisely this point to Nero in the course of trying to beg leave to retire from court and give up his wealth in AD 62 (*Annals* 14.52–6).

Such attempts to defend Seneca's wealth raise the further issue of a possible inconsistency with regard to his political activities. Clearly, Seneca was closely involved in politics as Nero's adviser, writing speeches and guiding his early reign in collaboration with Burrus. Many of his philosophical works, however, promote withdrawal from public life in favor of philosophical contemplation (most notably *De Otio*, on leisured withdrawal from social and political affairs, and *De Tranquilitate Animi*, on tranquility of mind). These works were written during Seneca's own retirement, but the question remains as to how well such a view maps on to his political career. There does seem to be a conflict between Seneca's advice and his own practice in this regard at least.

This apparent inconsistency between Seneca's status in politics and identity as philosopher is implicit even in his own writings. Although he is fond of drawing ethical *exempla* from the relatively recent past, Seneca's philosophical writings do not refer directly to his own life or to contemporary politics. This lack of contemporary detail is one of the reasons that it is so often so difficult to date Seneca's works. There is, however, one work for which we think we can establish a pretty firm date and which appears to be a clear attempt to marry Seneca's Stoicism with Neronian ideology, *De Clementia*. This treatise is particularly striking for the way that it tailors orthodox Stoic ethics to contemporary concerns.

De Clementia

De Clementia is an apparently unfinished treatise, probably intended to comprise three books, of which we have only the first and part of the second. Addressed directly to the young Nero, it presents an exploration of the specific (and specifically *Roman* – there is no obvious Greek equivalent) virtue of *clementia*, combining elements of Hellenistic kingship treatise, philosophical tract, and panegyric (Braund (2009) 17–23). The first book sets out to explain the particular importance and benefit of *clementia* for rulers, characterizing the virtuous ruler (who is carefully distinguished from the tyrant) as a rational, almost divine leader of his people. Seneca argues that a clement ruler is valuable in part for the way his virtuous leadership guides the attitudes and behavior of his people, lavishing praise on Nero along the way. In the second book, the grand rhetoric gives way to more explicitly Stoic attempts to define *clementia* as distinguished from similar concepts pertaining to pity or compassion such as *misericordia* or *lenitas*.

Even in the face of such efforts, it is hard to tell precisely what Seneca means by *clementia*, partly because there exists a degree of conflict between the definitions and explanations offered in the two books (see Griffin (1976) 151–8 and Braund (2009) 30–44). Certainly, it involves some element of pardon, but to be clement is not simply to issue a blanket pardon (1.2.2: *non tamen uolgo ignoscere decet*) because a pardon based on clemency should be informed by impassionate, rational consideration of what is best

for the subject under judgment in their particular circumstances. *Clementia* is opposed to *crudelitas* and *saevitia*, both of which imply irrational cruelty, but Seneca is explicitly praising rational clemency rather than irrational mercy. As Griffin points out, Seneca is primarily concerned with *clementia* as it is found in the administration of justice (Griffin (1976) 150–51).

With its skilful combination of admonition and praise, the first book of *De Clementia* demonstrates not only Seneca's rhetorical skill but also his interest in the proper methods of inculcating virtue in the young. He presents himself as writing about *clementia* for the youthful emperor "so I can act as a kind of mirror and show you yourself as someone who will achieve the greatest pleasure of all" (*ut quodam modo speculi vice fungerer et te tibi ostenderem peruenturum ad voluptatem maximam omnium*, 1.1.1). Seneca sets out to reflect the best possible Nero in the hope of encouraging his pupil to understand, pursue, and maintain virtue. However, the explicit focus on rulers, whether emperors or kings (and Seneca does employ the term *rex* although he never applies it directly to Nero), gives way in the second book to an emphasis on the sage. Seneca walks a fine line here. Writing for Nero requires a greater diplomacy than for young Lucilius (the recipient of his *Epistulae Morales*) and Seneca must be very careful in offering a paradigm of virtue for the emperor without implying that he falls short of it in any way.

De Clementia is one of the few Senecan texts that can be relatively securely dated. At 1.9.1, Seneca refers to the fact that Nero is "just past his eighteenth year" and this is a clear indication that the work was written some time in the year following December AD 55, during the relatively successful period at the start of Nero's reign. For some, this dating is a source of concern, because it seems to imply a degree of dishonesty on Seneca's part (see Griffin (1976) 133–6 and 407–11 for a summary of the debate). *De Clementia* explicitly praises Nero for his *innocentia* (1.5.1) and the worry is that such praise is hardly appropriate or persuasive in the wake of Nero's alleged murder of Britannicus in early 55. Whilst it seems plausible that, at this point in time, Nero's possible role in Britannicus' murder would not have been common knowledge, this would hardly serve as a defense of Seneca's honesty (for he would surely have been aware of his pupil's murderous activities). Even if Nero's crime was public knowledge, Seneca would have been eager to present the murder as out of character for the new regime (Griffin (2008) 45–6). Either way, this choice of terminology, in the face of Nero's crime, is evidence of the combination of concerns that dictates the tone and content of *De Clementia*. For, whilst the work is addressed to Nero himself, it is clearly intended for a wider audience. In praising Nero's *innocentia*, Seneca is attempting both to concentrate Nero's young mind on the virtue demanded by and best suited to his position as emperor and to demonstrate to a wider readership his status as a promisingly virtuous ruler. So, although Nero is the explicit addressee of *De Clementia*, it is clear that Seneca has other readers and motives in mind.

One aim of *De Clementia* is to set out an "Ideology for a New Regime" (Griffin (1976) 129–71). The choice to concentrate on *clementia* as the most significant virtue of a ruler sends a particular message to Seneca's general reader. Claudius' reign was characterized (not least in Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis*) by its cruelty and, in particular, by its lack of concern for judicial propriety. The focus on Nero's *clementia*, a virtue essentially bound up with legal practice, serves to emphasize his difference from Claudius. The importance of *clementia* for Neronian ideology is clear from the fact that Seneca also composed speeches for Nero stressing his commitment to the virtue (*Annals* 13.11).

So, in addition to being a didactic exercise, *De Clementia* combines philosophy with Neronian propaganda.

A further purpose of *De Clementia* is as propaganda not only for Nero, but also for Seneca. At 2.5.2, Seneca notes the charge against Stoicism that "it has a negative reputation for being excessively harsh and least likely to give advice to emperors and kings." This suggests two things. First, it indicates something about the general perception of Stoics as out of step with or unsuited to practical politics. Secondly, it demonstrates Seneca's concern to present himself as a committed Stoic, even if that affiliation requires him to make a further defense of the practical usefulness of Stoicism. As noted above, Seneca is far from the first Stoic to be associated with the highest echelons of power in Rome. He is, however, undoubtedly the Stoic who exercised the most political power (at least until Marcus Aurelius) and *De Clementia* is, in part, an attempt to demonstrate the positive influence of Seneca and his expertise in moral philosophy on the young emperor. Seneca is at pains to emphasize both his status as a *philosophical* adviser and the practical *political* benefits of Stoic ethics. *De Clementia* presents an attempt to guide the young emperor not just to virtue, but to *Stoic* virtue and simultaneously constructs for Seneca the role not of mere political adviser or speechwriter, but of philosophical instructor to a potential philosopher-king.

Clearly then, Seneca is eager to present himself as a Stoic and *De Clementia* as a work of Stoicism. However, whilst virtue stands at the heart of Stoic philosophy, Seneca's politically motivated emphasis on *clementia* might seem rather to undermine his Stoic credentials. *Clementia* is clearly an important Roman virtue, but it is explicitly not a *Stoic* virtue. For the Stoics, just action generally coincides with the strict application of the letter of the law (*Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* 3 640) and, although Seneca is at pains to emphasize that *clementia* is not "mercy" in the sense of the suspension of appropriate punishment, he also claims that it guides judgments "not according to the letter of the law" (2.7.3). Further, in advocating that a virtuous ruler should aim at *clementia* by selecting the least severe of a range of appropriate punishments, Seneca stands at odds with the clear Stoic preference for *severitas* (harshness) (*Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* 3.639). In fact, *De Clementia* shows Seneca at pains both to incorporate orthodox Stoic ethical doctrine and to make that doctrine relevant to his particular situation. The focus on *clementia* is dictated by circumstance, but Seneca is keen to demonstrate its proper Stoic credentials for selection over *severitas* (despite accepting the latter as a virtue at 2.4.1). He does so by emphasizing the way in which *clementia* serves another Stoic virtue, *humanitas* (something akin to our "philanthropy") (2.5.2–3; see Braund (2009) 66–8).

The lengths to which Seneca goes to bolster the Stoic credentials of *clementia* demonstrate both his anxiety to present his teachings as orthodox Stoicism and his awareness that this is something of a stretch. *De Clementia* is a self-aware attempt to adapt Stoicism to the fluctuating politics of imperial Rome. It may not be the best account of Stoic doctrine (just as Seneca's life may not be the best example of the Stoic life) but it is a fine example of philosophy in action, adapting to circumstance in an attempt to make it applicable and relevant.

De Clementia is intended to describe and defend Nero's virtue, Seneca's advisory role, and Stoic doctrine. To what degree can it be considered representative of Seneca's philosophical corpus as a whole? It appears to have close parallels with another Senecan treatise, *De Ira* (*On Anger*), written under Claudius. Where *De Clementia* instructs on

the pursuit of a virtue, *De Ira* attempts to educate in how to avoid a vice, and both stand as part of a general project in ethical pedagogy. In *De Ira* too, we see a practical application of doctrine and both texts demonstrate the typically Senecan use of rhetorical flourish and predilection for near-contemporary *exempla*. The works demonstrate such unity of purpose, style, and methodology that *De Ira*, as a complete text, has been used as a basis for speculation as to the content of missing parts of *De Clementia* (Braund (2009)).

Seneca's letters, written during his self-imposed retirement from court, frequently stress the need for withdrawal from public life as promoting philosophical activity (see, for example, *Epistulae* xxxvi). There is a clear tension here with *De Clementia*'s assertion that Stoicism is relevant and useful to Nero. It might be tempting to point to this tension as further evidence of Seneca's hypocrisy. It is clear, however, that Seneca views philosophy as a guide for living and thus as something that must take account of circumstances as they fluctuate throughout one's life. So, just as he can find in Stoicism what is relevant and significant to the rule of an emperor and his own role as adviser, he can also find tenets relevant and useful to his situation in those years when his influence on Nero has waned to the point of peril. Perhaps it is simply not possible to be a pragmatist without opening oneself up to charges of hypocrisy. Of course, it's equally possible that Seneca's letters are written with an understandably more pessimistic view of politics than *De Clementia*. After all, Seneca both admits that he has not achieved virtue (*Epistulae* lxxv.15) and exhorts that we must "say what we feel and feel what we say: let speech agree with life" (*Epistulae* lxxv.4).

If we are looking for an example of explicitly Neronian philosophy, *De Clementia* is surely it. It is addressed to Nero, promulgates Neronian values, and emphasizes and defends Seneca's own role as adviser to Nero. Seneca is, in a sense, presenting himself as a Neronian philosopher and asserting and defending the role of philosophy in Neronian politics. Certainly, Seneca is portraying his role *as a philosophical adviser* as at the heart of what is good about Nero's reign.

De Clementia is evidence of Seneca's intention to set *clementia* at the heart of Neronian ideology and it is clear that this value was given prominence in the first five years of Nero's reign (*Annals* 13.11), but the question remains as to the success of Seneca's ethical advice to the emperor. There have been attempts to trace evidence of the policy of *clementia* in the details of some of Nero's judicial actions (Griffin (1976) 170–1) and *clementia* continues to be mentioned throughout Tacitus' *Annals* in the period following Seneca's retirement from court. However, it is notable that it starts to appear not as *clementia per se* but rather in examples of Nero's attempts to demonstrate the *appearance* of *clementia*. Nero seems to have learnt at least what a virtuous ruler should look like, even if that appearance is transparently thin. It's certainly hard to find evidence of dispassionate *clementia* in his dealings with the Pisonian conspiracy, which, after all, claimed the life of his erstwhile tutor.

Conclusion

Each of these three philosophers active under Nero exercises influence on his contemporary culture in a different way. Cornutus' influence is most easily identifiable in his role as teacher of Persius and Lucan, both of whom write poetry informed by Stoic philosophy. Musonius had a passing involvement in Neronian politics via his role as

teacher of Rubellius Plautus and assumes a prominent role in the Second Sophistic reception of Nero. In fact, his influence is greatest after Nero, in his role as the teacher of Epictetus. The significance of Seneca's role as tutor and then adviser to Nero is clear and *De Clementia* represents a direct link between Seneca's Stoicism and Neronian ideology.

We have seen that many of the generalizations of imperial philosophy fit these authors. All three are Stoics, although Seneca is happy to borrow from Epicureanism and Musonius may well be incorporating elements of Plato's thought into his proposals for the equality of women. Each has a clear interest in ethics, even Cornutus, whose "Summary" demonstrates a genuine concern for the behavior and ethical well-being of its audience, despite being a work of physics.

Perhaps the factor that most obviously unites these three philosophers is their shared concern with pedagogy. Each lives up to the characterization of Stoicism in this period as concerned more with the man striving to be good than with the ideal sage and this is clearly connected to their interest in education and training. Insofar as they do offer any innovations in philosophy, it is in the way they adapt doctrine to their educative purpose. Cornutus' only surviving work is a school textbook. Musonius' speeches illustrate his interest in education via both his choice of topics, which include discussions of philosophical training and the education of women, and the prominence of the theme of how to cultivate virtuous behavior. *De Clementia* presents Seneca as Nero's philosophical adviser and the work itself offers his thoughts on the difficulties and proper methods of educating the young in virtue (a theme shared by *De Ira*). In this regard, however, there is one significant difference between Cornutus and Musonius on the one hand and Seneca on the other. For the former pair were explicitly recognized as *professional* teachers of philosophy, whereas Seneca, for all that he was both a tutor and known to have philosophical interests, was primarily regarded as an orator and politician.

The other notable difference is that Seneca is the only one of these three to write his philosophy in Latin. It may be that this contributed to his being perceived as an amateur and to the fact that his influence on the philosophers of the next generation appears negligible. Even in Rome in the first century AD, when Athens's dominance of philosophy has long been on the wane, "real" philosophers write in Greek. Nowadays, of course, Seneca's name dominates scholarship on philosophy in the Roman empire and *De Clementia* remains as a fascinating example of an attempt to write philosophy that is Neronian not just in time but also in ideology. It is essentially a work of *Roman* philosophy and, as such, it could only have been written in Latin.

FURTHER READING

Scholarship on philosophy in the Neronian period in general is far less prevalent than that on Seneca in particular. There are, however, some useful summaries of Roman philosophy, such as Morford (2002) and Long (2003). On Stoicism in the Roman empire, see Gill (2003). Erler (2009) gives a useful summary of imperial Epicureanism. The philosophical volumes of *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* offer a huge range of articles on the activities of the different philosophical schools in this period. Brunt (1975) considers the question of Stoic attitudes towards the Principate.

There is, as yet, no readily available translation of Cornutus, and scholarship on the "Summary" is scarce indeed, but Most (1989) and Boys-Stones (2007) are comprehensive and provocative.

Lutz (1947) provides a useful biography and translation of Musonius. Nussbaum (2002) offers a rare attempt to engage with his philosophy.

Braund's (2009) recent edition of *De Clementia* presents text, translation, and comprehensive introduction and commentary. Griffin (1976) is still the best account of the (lack of) connection between Seneca's political and philosophical lives.

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PART III

Literature, Art, and Architecture

CHAPTER 9

Seneca, *Apocolocyntosis*

Christopher L. Whitton

But, Caesar, can there be anyone so dull and stupid as to take pains over jesting?
(Julian, *Caesares* 306a)

Apocolocyntosis reigns supreme as the funniest piece of Neroniana. It is also one of the most baffling: jokes are not perhaps the classicist's forte. Philological rigor combines with a touch of Saturnalian release as scholars scrutinize the nature and consequence of Claudius' fatal deifecation (*Apoc.* 4.2): Athanassakis (1973, 1974) is the expert here, but we have Dobesch (2002) to thank for the suggestion that *animam ebulliit* ("he bubbled out his life") depicts a nasty case of diarrhea. Bigger questions are at stake too: *Apocolocyntosis* subjects imperial apotheosis to an extraordinary slapping, yet offers at the same time one of Roman literature's most exuberant acclamations of the emperor as living near-deity. Jokes about liberty and slavery are all very well when the tyrant is dead, but who really thinks freedom is on the cards under the new boy monarch? It also shows a side to Seneca that still causes unease. No sage meditations here: Seneca drops the philosopher's pallium and puts on jester's bells to frolic before his 16-going-on-17-year-old pupil and master, not to mention the rest of his audience. Where's the lesson now?

We'll skip the traditional précis: if you want to know what happens, go and read it. At 3000 words, it's shorter than any chapter in this book. Profit from the rare indulgence of the "green and yellow," complete with translation (Eden 1984). I will spare you lengthy dissection of author (Seneca), date (late AD 54), and title (something about a vegetable of the family *cucurbitaceae*). The first two have few doubters. As for the title, *quot homines tot colocyntae* (pick your own pumpkin): start with Eden (1984) 1–4 and Braund and James (1998) 298–301, or try the 50 pages of Heller (1985). Most would at least agree that it plays on the word "apotheosis" and that it is a joke at Claudius' expense. That Claudius does not in fact turn into a pumpkin, gourd-vine, or other

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vegetable matter, need concern only the small-minded. Instead, this brief introduction to *Apocolocyntosis* will (1) assess its unique employment of Menippean satire in an accession context; (2) argue for a wider audience than many commentators suppose; (3) address the well-trodden but still controversial issue of skepticism at apotheosis; (4) finally, fumble with the stellar cameo in *Apocolocyntosis* 4.1 for the boy-king Nero, honorand of Seneca's work – and of our *Companion*.

Menippean Monarchy

Apocolocyntosis is a unique specimen, a near-complete Latin example of the peculiar genre of Menippean satire (just one lost manuscript leaf between *Apoc.* 7 and 8 spoils the show). Named for the third-century BC Cynic philosopher Menippus of Gadara (works now lost), this genre was and is defined by its unique blending of verse and prose, *genus mixtum* to Quintilian (*Institutio Oratoria* 10.1.95), *prosimetrum* in mediaeval jargon (Riikonen (1987) 11–2; Relihan (1993) 12–21). This definition by form, characteristic of ancient analysis, tells only part of the story: like other varieties of satire, the genre is also marked by its ludic irreverence (Relihan (1993)). "Ludic irreverence" is at one level a good description of *Apocolocyntosis*, as the cheeky narrator puts us in our place before stripping poets, gods, and above all Claudius of their dignity. Yet Claudius, like every individual named in this piece bar Nero, was dead at the time of writing, and *Apocolocyntosis* gives every reason to suppose that showing irreverence to him was, in the new regime, anything but irreverent (Braund (1993)). According to this (common) view, Seneca co-opts the Menippean genre for a new brand of political loyalism. A contrary reading privileges the genre as interpretative determinant: for Relihan (1993) 75–90, followed by Paschalis (2009b) 202–4, *Apocolocyntosis*' unreliable and credulous narrator divests himself of all authority; his wrongheaded criticisms of Claudius should thus elicit not mockery but sympathy for the dead *princeps*. Where the standard view may risk underplaying the satirical side, Relihan's alternative vision loses sight of the political moment. My chapter will follow the mainstream, beginning with a review of political and (other) literary contexts which suggests that *Apocolocyntosis* adds up to a strong endorsement not just of Nero but of monarchy as an institution. Yet we will have to admit on the way that satire's anti-authoritarian streak is a recurrent threat to any stability in *Apocolocyntosis*' ideology of power.

Apocolocyntosis is just one example of a rising trend in first-century literature, of vilifying a dead emperor to praise a living one. Claudius is made a counterexemplary *princeps*, a monster with monstrous rule, while the beautiful boy Nero promises an idyllic golden age to come (Braund and James (1998)). Seneca was practiced in such techniques: his treatise on anger, written early in Claudius' principate, makes the freshly deceased Caligula a prime example of failed self-control (Fillion-Lahille (1984) 273–82), and two or three years later his *Consolation to Polybius* begs that the "madness" of Caligula's rule be remedied by the godlike Claudius (13.1). Later authors would line up to denounce Nero to the benefit of Flavian emperors, Domitian to the benefit of Trajan (Ramage (1989)). Of course vilification of his predecessor was not the only possible treatment which an emperor might encourage or tolerate; one might instead, especially when handling a brother or father, celebrate the predecessor and stake a claim as his

heir. Nero notoriously did both, deifying Claudius (his stepfather, father-in-law, and adoptive father) and taking the title *diui filius* ("son of a deity") in public, joking about murderous mushrooms in private. So runs the familiar tale, though Nero, only 16 at accession, was surely not pulling all the strings. What matters to us is that his tutor Seneca was in the most intimate of Palatine circles, and that *Apocolocyntosis* followed hard on Claudius' death. It thus joins *On Clemency* as a prime witness of Neronian accession literature. Written some time the following year, that altogether more strait-laced work steers Nero towards good governance, and advertises Seneca's place at the heart of it to his broader senatorial readership (Braund (2009) 1–76). Where *Apocolocyntosis* for the most part dwells on Claudius, exposing autocracy gone wrong, *On Clemency* presents the other side of the coin, focusing on the ideal ruler Nero should be. There is no reason to suppose Seneca thought of them as a diptych, but reading them together can be productive (Leach (1989); Braund and James (1998)): despite their differences, the view of monarchy on offer in these two texts proves surprisingly coherent.

Take the motif of freedom which frames *Apocolocyntosis.* Our blasé narrator begins his tale by assuring us he'll refuse to name his sources if he wants. "Who's going to force me? I know that I was set free (*scio me liberum factum*) when [Claudius] breathed his last" (translations are mostly mine). If Claudius' death brought freedom, his principate meant slavery. As Eden (1984: 63) notes, our narrator is not promising to say what he likes, but asserting first his right *not* to speak. Only after this does he make the complementary promise that "if I feel like replying" (*si libuerit respondere*, playing, despite the different vowel quantity, on *liberum factum*) he'll say whatever comes to mind. Silence is a right he claims only in principle: in practice, Saturnalian license will reign. Whether or not *Apocolocyntosis* was written for the Saturnalia of December 54, this text revels in the paradox of making Claudius, the *Saturnalicius princeps* (8.2), a "lord of misrule" whose party turned sour, while at the same time exuding the mood of carnival and freedom triggered by his death (Nauta (1987); Versnel (1993b)).

Having begun with the manumission of our narrator, *Apocolocyntosis* ends with the enslavement of Claudius. Condemned to the eternal torture of a perforated dice-box (hell for a gambler like him, 12.3.30–31), Claudius finds his sentence transmuted, as Caligula makes a sudden appearance to claim him as his slave (15.2). His new penalty is to work for Caligula's freedman Menander in an infernal equivalent of the Palatine civil service (I follow Eden's emended text, but differ in making Menander, not Claudius, the "secretary for petitions": so already Heinze (1926) 77–8). The task might seem appealing to this court-addict (7.4–5, 10.4, 12.3.19–28) – but now he will not be *princeps*, nor even the kind of freedman secretary who under Claudius ruled the roost (6.2). To be slave to your nephew would be bad enough, worse still when that nephew is Caligula; but (by my reading) Claudius goes one step further down the ladder, slave not just to Caligula but to his freedman.

This final enslavement generates ring-composition with *Apocolocyntosis*' opening declaration of *libertas* and a healthy dose of poetic justice. But how straightforward is the mirroring of Claudius and narrator? Claudius, in the fiction of the satire, will be a slave forever. Is the freedom of our satirist permanent? The Saturnalia, we recall, lasts only a week or so – and whatever Seneca's relationship to the narrator, his time in the role of unsenatorial (Encolpian?) Fool is strictly confined to this one appearance.

Libertas appears just once more in *Apocolocyntosis*. As Claudius passes by his funeral, we glimpse the celebrating crowd: "everyone was happy and merry. The Roman people were walking about like free men" (*omnes laeti, hilari: populus Romanus ambulabat tamquam liber*, 12.3). I reproduce here Eden's translation, which (inevitably) loses the ambiguity of *tamquam*, a conjunction that neither confirms nor denies their freedom. Still, one may, like Robinson (2005: 250), suspect provocation. In withholding confirmation that the *populus* is indeed free, is Seneca *challenging* the rhetoric of freedom? In Robinson's favor is the Menippean context: in the genre which strains against authority, the one thing that *is* authorized is semantic free play. Nevertheless, even if we accept the possible implication that the Roman people is *not* really free even under Nero, to suspect subversion here seems to me misplaced.

Seneca's (largely consistent) public view of imperial autocracy is a pragmatic one (Griffin (1976) 129–221). The vicissitudes of the late Republic had damaged Rome so badly and so permanently that enlightened monarchy was the only salvation: as he later put it, Pompey had "brought the Roman people into such a state that it could not be saved except by *the favor of slavery* (*beneficio seruitutis*)" (*On Benefits* 5.16.4). Monarchy is slavery, but a slavery to be embraced. On this point even *On Clemency*, where Seneca is working hard to advertise autocracy, is forthright. At the opening he describes the plebs as "quarrelling, seditious, and wild, sure to run riot to the destruction of others and itself alike, if it breaks this yoke (*si hoc iugum fregerit*)" (*On Clemency* 1.1.1). Later he describes how the young Augustus' clemency won him popularity "although he had taken hold of the Roman people's neck when it was not yet broken in (*nondum subactis populi Romani ceruicibus*)" (*On Clemency* 1.10.2). At both points Seneca is clear that the Roman people have, by Nero's time, been "yoked": this hard metaphor of animalistic slavery – sub*jug*ation – leaves little room for dewy-eyed republican sentimentality. But we should notice that in *On Clemency* 1.1.1 the yoke is imposed specifically on the plebs, while in *On Clemency* 1.10.2, *On Benefits* 5.16.4, and our passage in *Apocolocyntosis* 12.3, Seneca speaks of the *populus Romanus*. While not explicitly excluding the senatorial elite, defining enslavement in terms of the *populus* gives Seneca some wriggle room when the sticky question arises, are the people who really matter slaves to the emperor too? You won't catch him saying so, and when Caligula demands explicitly slavish behavior from a senator Seneca is outraged (*On Benefits* 2.12.2): senators *are* a different matter. Coming from *On Clemency*, we see the passing "freedom" of the *populus* in *Apoc.* 12.3 for what it is. Their party will have to come to an end, and that, in Seneca's terms, presents no ideological embarrassment.

Libertas is one – very sensitive – area where Saturnalian inversion and Menippean play hold out potential for a "subversive" *Apocolocyntosis*. Yet reading in the context of other Senecan literature allows a view in which even denying freedom is, in crude terms, more regime-friendly than regime-hostile. In any case, Seneca *is* the regime. Little surprise, then, that in its relentless *ad hominem* attack on Claudius, not to mention the praise of Nero to which we will come later, *Apocolocyntosis* underwrites not just Nero as regent but the Principate as institution (Kloft (1972) 215–21). Risky topics like the emperor's relationship with the Senate are displaced into tidy specifics of *Claudian* injustice (Raaflaub (1989) 34–5); the autocracy of a good emperor, on these terms, is *justified* by the exposure of Claudian misrule.

Who's Laughing Anyway?

But to speak of Seneca justifying monarchy invites questions of audience. For whom was he writing? How was this text first performed? How far was it disseminated? Most have now moved beyond a crudely author-focused view of an *Apocolocyntosis* in which Seneca spits bile in revenge for his Claudian exile (Currie (1962)). Eden (1984: 12–13), for instance, maintains that "the chief function of the work is obliquely didactic" and that "the intended audience was Nero and his intimates." The first of these suggestions depends on privileging the criticisms of Claudius' governance – high senatorial death counts, maladministration, subservience to freedmen – and ignoring the heavy emphasis on personal ridicule of Claudius as mentally and physically unfit to rule: stammering and limping are hardly faults which Nero can be advised not to develop. Equally, the praise of Nero in *Apoc.* 4.1 is hard to hold up as protreptic (advice masquerading as praise). The idea that Seneca is encouraging him to continue with new, enlightened policies (Griffin (1976) 130) is difficult to sustain given that amidst the extensive praise of Nero's beauty and singing ability, only three words concern policy, and in the vaguest terms: *legumque silentia rumpet* ("and he will break the silence of the laws"). Merfeld (1999: 68–9) ingeniously, but perversely, suggests that Apollo's commendation of Nero here is ironic: by dwelling on looks and voice so conspicuously, Seneca demonstrates the need to leave childish vanity behind. If that was his purpose, he hid it exceptionally well. Despite the current scholarly mantra that imperial panegyric functions through protreptic, it is hard to neutralize *Apocolocyntosis* in those terms.

Whether or not Seneca intends Nero as a primary reader or listener, it would be crass to make him the only one. Many scholars, like Eden, imagine an audience restricted to the imperial court, for two broad reasons. First, the argument runs, it is incredible that a wider, senatorial readership could tolerate such explicit mockery of their recent edict deifying Claudius; this would effectively strip Nero's title *diui filius* of all force, and expose the funeral speech written by Seneca and delivered by Nero as sheer hypocrisy. Further, the cynical handling of state religion, the very institution of apotheosis, would be unacceptable in society at large. Second, the text looks and feels like it was written for a recitation; especially if we take it to be a party-piece for the Saturnalia, the intimate setting of the court is a likely scenario. Thereafter the work disappeared for several centuries (Eden (1984) 8), or circulated among court circles, perhaps anonymously (Münscher (1922) 5: see Eden (1984) 7), or, in Dobesch's (2002: 67) imaginative formulation, did the rounds as "the latest anonymous work of Seneca."

Several of these arguments cause difficulty, starting with recitation. It is certainly plausible that *Apocolocyntosis* was recited at the Saturnalia, as argued best by Nauta (1987). The second-person plurals in the miniature second preface (5) suggest as much, and the line *talis Caesar adest* ("such a Caesar is at hand," 4.1.30) would be piquant with an emperor in the room (Cole (2006) 182). Yet Seneca takes no pains to be consistent about his second-person verbs: the opening addresses, in mock historical style, a single reader or listener, and in any case "traces of recitation," as Nauta (1987: 77–8) confesses, can just as well be inserted by artifice. But whatever *Apocolocyntosis*' first outing, that says nothing about its reception thereafter. A typical pattern of literary

dissemination was one or more private recitations followed by wider circulation (Kenney (1982); Johnson (2000)). Recitation was a crucial first step, but not the only one. Why make *Apocolocyntosis* an exception? Its sheer quality suggests a level of care which it is hard to imagine would be lavished on a one-off performance piece: the swirling wit, complex play, and tight structure look anything but ephemeral. Could Seneca have expended such efforts on a piece which only a handful of people would hear, on one night only?

Then there are the echoes which have been heard in Neronian, Flavian, and Trajanic literature and beyond – in Petronius (Courtney (1991) 11; Paschalis (2009a)), Persius (Verdière (1956) 345–6), pseudo-Seneca *Octavia* (Marti (1952); Hoyos (2005)), the younger Pliny (Whitton (2010) 137 n.124), Tacitus (Dickison (1977); O'Gorman (2005) 106–7), Juvenal (Courtney (1980) 197–8, 344; Hardie (1997–8) 120), Suetonius (Schmidt (1988); Jones (2000) 122), and Calpurnius Siculus (who, as Horsfall (1997: 180) demonstrates, alludes to Seneca in *Eclogues* 4.139–41 and not *vice versa*); consider too Silius Italicus *Punica* 8.559–61, a semi-divine Scipio to match the Nero of *Apoc.* 4.1.30–2. Of course these perceived echoes may (and some surely do) tell more about modern over-ingenuity than ancient reception, but you only have to buy one or two to accept that *Apocolocyntosis* had entered a broader circulation in the literary elite. Arguments from silence, such as Tacitus' failure to mention it, are scant defense. Finally, Cassius Dio's knowledge of the work in the third century (*Roman History* 60.35.2) and the unanimity of manuscripts in attributing it to Seneca (Reeve (1984)) are hard to reconcile with public suppression or anonymous circulation.

As for arguments *against* a wider readership, a central difficulty is the glib use of the terms "court" and "Senate," as if the two were detached, separately uniform and mutually exclusive. Society was far more complex: not to mention the most obvious court–Senate overlap in our case (Seneca), the court was a flexible institution – anything from the emperor and a few individuals (family, freedmen, senatorial advisors) to large gatherings including hundreds of senators (Wallace-Hadrill (1996); Winterling (2009) 79–102). At the same time we can be sure that the Senate was no homogeneous group of identikit ideologues. To maintain therefore that "the court" could mock Claudius' deification privately, while "the Senate" was unable to see through, or admit, the farce of his apotheosis, is grossly reductive. It also ignores Tacitus' view of autumn AD 54. He arranges his narrative so that the decree of *consecratio* which elevated Claudius to heaven (*Annals* 13.2.3) immediately precedes the funeral at which "no one" could help laughing at Nero's speech praising Claudius' foresight and wisdom (*Annals* 13.3.1). Whatever the accuracy of his chronology (Fishwick (2002)), Tacitus' juxtaposition is eloquent, generating a quick double-step of deification and mockery – all this in the very un-Palatine sphere of senate-house and forum. Who were those po-faced senators who, according to many scholars, could not see the funny side of making Claudius a god? The *rire d'exclusion* which encouraged the "court" to cohere in reviling Claudius and accepting Nero, and the *Ventilsitten* ("letting off steam") which allowed a moment's Saturnalian release before knuckling down to life under fresh autocracy (Nauta (1987) 90–6), could be just as effective in the wider readership of the literary elite. (Of course "literary elite" is a monolithic term with its own imprecisions, but it is a necessary improvement on the fallacy that the (illiterate) "populace" taken whole could savor literature like this (Grimal (1991) 113).)

Apocolocyntosis need not be directed minutely at Nero, or even at his immediate circle. Like Leach (1989) – but with less credence in irony and subversion – I suggest a broader readership including much or all of the senatorial order. But one large area of doubt remains to be confronted, concerning religion and skepticism. Could Seneca really be so publicly irreverent to apotheosis?

De-deification

With its uniquely parodic treatment of deification, *Apocolocyntosis* exerts a fatal fascination on cultural historians. Is it proof that no one really believed all the mumbo-jumbo (Eden (1984) 7), or conversely of the stability of an imperial cult which could tolerate such satire (Feeney (1991) 110–11)? Is Seneca exploding the myth of apotheosis, or defending a nascent religion by legislating against an injustice like Divus Claudius (Price (1987) 87–9; Cole (2006))? Is this proof of two-tier godhead, which denies Claudius "absolute divinity" and the title *deus*, but leaves his "relative divinity," the title *diuus* awarded by the Senate, intact (Gradel (2002) 325–30)? The debate has been extensive, and the questions are intricate. My response will be in line with what you've read so far: despite the potential for destabilization, *Apocolocyntosis* conspires (with my reading) to tell a "loyal" story: Claudius' deification is meaningless, but that of Augustus, potential paradigm for any future emperor, was not. "Meaning," for our purposes, concerns the elite discourse of acceptance: "belief," the plebs, and the provinces can be left aside as we assess *Apocolocyntosis* as an elite text for elite consumption in Rome.

The rules of the game are spelled out in the opening paragraph, as our narrator cites his authority (1.2):

> if I must produce a witness, ask the man who saw Drusilla going to heaven: he will say that he saw Claudius making the journey "with unequal step" [*non passibus aequis*]. Whether he likes it or not, he can't help seeing everything that goes on in heaven: he's the curator of the Via Appia, the way, as you know, both the Deified Augustus and the emperor Tiberius went to the gods [*qua scis et Diuum Augustum et Tiberium Caesarem ad deos isse*].

This travesty of historical enquiry is a demolition job on Livius Geminius, the senator who testified to Drusilla's ascension 16 years previously (Dio 59.11.4), and whom Seneca conjures up as his pseudo-source for that of Claudius. Every detail redounds to Geminius' discredit, starting with Drusilla, the sister-lover of Caligula deified on her death in AD 38. Seneca damns Caligula throughout his works, and his attitude to Drusilla's apotheosis, as to Caligula's assumed godhead in life, is patently skeptical: what good news *that* was (*tam bono nuntio*, 1.3; cf. *On Tranquility of Mind* 14.9 with Barrett (1989) 290 n.52). The very first person named in *Apocolocyntosis*, then, and the woman with whom Claudius is aligned, is the exemplar of deification abused. But the sarcasm stretches to encompass ascension itself. That famous Virgilian image of Claudius limping his way to heaven (a twist on *Aeneid* 2.724) is not just mockery of his disability, but grotesque confusion of the physical (a man walking) and the figurative (the journey from mortality to divinity). It is one thing to talk abstractly about "going to heaven" (*euntem in caelum*), but to specify "limping," to force the visualization, is a different matter. Absurd literalism continues with Geminius' job as curator of the Via Appia. This,

our *faux ingénu* narrator assures us, is ideal qualification, since Augustus and Tiberius both travelled that way to the gods. Again, the joke lies in fusing the physical and the figurative. Both Augustus and Tiberius died in Campania, meaning that each departed Rome for his final journey south along the Appia (*pace* Eden (1984) 66, Russo (1985) 49, Lund (1994) 62, and Green (2010) 275, who all take Seneca to mean the journey of the corpses back to Rome). By muddling this journey down the main road with the metaphorical "journey" of deification from this world to the next, Seneca reaches the conclusion that heaven must lie down the Appia and that Geminius accordingly has a good view of it. He marks the absurdity by including Tiberius, an emperor who we all know was *not* deified. The incongruity is hard to miss, given the nomenclature (*Diuus Augustus* but ostentatiously not-*Diuus Tiberius Caesar*) and the provocative pointer *scis* – "you know" – accompanying a statement which we know precisely to be false. This is no slip by Seneca (Eden (1984) 66) or by his narrator (Relihan (1993) 79), no proof that ascension had been attested for Tiberius (Bickermann (1929) 101), no attempt to elevate Tiberius to some alternative pantheon (Cole (2006) 179–80), above all no marker of "serious" intent (Green (2010) 275): it is a blatant ironic flag. It is no more true that Tiberius went to the gods than that the Via Appia leads to heaven. Geminius' testimony is destroyed, and with it any notion of (literal) ascension.

Where does this leave Augustus? Is the veracity of *his* deification in question too? This looks like tricky interpretative ground. For one thing Divus Augustus has a cardinal role to play in the satire to come: his intervention will turn the course of the heavenly debate and guarantee Claudius' damnation; it will also intensify *Apocolocyntosis*' assault, denouncing him as not just crippled fool but also serial murderer. Will the internal logic of the satire not collapse if we deny him his own place in the divine council to start with? Besides, it is one thing to mock Drusilla's deification and Tiberius' lack of it, but to question the apotheosis of Augustus would imply an outright attack on the system of imperial consecration itself.

It is important to locate Seneca's joke precisely. To point out that neither Augustus nor Tiberius went to heaven down the Via Appia is not to deny that Augustus reached heaven at all. The axis of mockery is the notion of a *physical* journey to heaven. Outside the conventions of epic, the journey between mortality and immortality, earth and heaven (or hell), is slippery – and so potentially funny – ontological ground. Lucian begins his *Icaromenippus* with Menippus tallying up the distance he travelled to heaven: "so, it was three hundred miles from the earth to the moon . . . from there up to the sun around fifteen hundred miles more . . . and then about a day's flying for an eagle travelling light." Lucian's joke, of course, lies in taking "heaven above" literally: when mythology and mundanity coincide, friction is inevitable. That friction is the source of much of Ovid's spice when he fuses Roman history with the divine apparatus of mythology in the *Metamorphoses*, not least in the chain of deifications including Hercules, Romulus, and Julius Caesar (Feeney (1991) 205–24); the ascension of Romulus also earns a sly joke in the *Fasti* (2.475–514: Barchiesi (1997) 112–19). Recounting tales of apotheosis with wide-eyed innocence, Ovid constantly threatens to destabilize these Roman and Julian myths by taking them just too literally. When therefore Seneca's Diespiter proposes that Claudius be deified and "added to the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid" (9.5), the evocation of Ovid's divine debates is elegant (Feeney (1991) 207), but the joke is also perhaps on Diespiter himself, for failing to see that deification by the rules of the *Metamorphoses*

brings as much risk as glory. Yet Ovid is by no means the only author to raise questions about apotheosis. On the contrary, credence in literal, physical ascension was no more the norm in imperial elite discourse than it was in that of the Republic. Comments on the death and supposed deification of Romulus, first king and first Roman deificand, make this plain: Cicero (*Republic* 2.17–20), Livy (1.15.6–1.16.8) and Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Roman Antiquities* 2.56) are all more interested in the fact that the plebs believed it than in endorsing its "truth" (cf. Plutarch, *Romulus* 27–8; *Numa* 2; for the extensive debate on Livy, see Sailor (2006) 345–8). When Seneca jokes about the route to heaven, even in terms of the imperial cult, it is neither new nor shocking.

How then *did* Augustus "go to the gods"? In a nutshell, deification could be made palatable in elite literature by playing down the physical side and focusing on, let us say, the figurative: take away the anthropomorphic image of gods in heaven above, and think in more abstract terms. Godhead is not sitting on a cloud, but the reward for a life of virtue. (I schematize, of course: to sample the vast scholarly debate, see Hopkins (1978) 197–242; Price (1984, 1987); Beard and Henderson (1998); Gradel (2002) 261–371.) The idea that divinity could be achieved through merit was long-lived and flexible, from the mythological import Hercules through philosophers' heroes like Cicero's Scipio (*Republic* 6) and Lucretius' Epicurus (*De Rerum Natura* 5.1–54), and it is not hard to see how it could be adapted for the purposes of the Principate: if deification is the reward for an exceptional human, that in imperial terms means the *princeps*. So for the elder Pliny, writing in the AD 70s, belief in divine anthropomorphism is childish delusion, but that is not to deny the existence of divinity: "*god* means for one mortal to help another (*deus est mortali iuuare mortalem*), and this is the route to eternal glory" – a route which, he affirms, Vespasian is now treading (*Natural History* 2.17–18). Of course apotheosis was a fluid institution, especially in the early decades of the Principate, and elite discourse has room both for the loyalist rationalizing of a Pliny and for the bitter cynicism of a Lucan (*Civil War* 7.445–9: Feeney (1991) 297–8). But *Apocolocyntosis*, I suggest, need not be rocking any institutional boat.

It is precisely the flexibility of discourse which allows Seneca to disenfranchise Claudius without necessarily challenging Augustus and the institution exemplified in him. Consider again Claudius' hapless advocate Diespiter. He claims that Claudius deserves his place in heaven as a blood-relative first of his (adoptive) grandfather Divus Augustus, second of "his grandmother Diva Augusta, whom he personally ordered to be a god (*quam ipse deam esse iussit*)" (9.5). Just in case we forget that Livia was deified, so becoming Diva Augusta, not on her death in AD 29 but at Claudius' instigation over a decade later, Diespiter makes the point explicitly. It is a spectacular rhetorical misfire (Kraft (1966) 108), exposing his own weakness as advocate and Claudius' cynical self-interest in deifying her in the first place: like Drusilla, Livia is marked for her "sham deification" (Cole (2006) 180–81). Of course, while poets might sing of gods claiming emperors for their own, everyone knew that imperial deification depended on human agency – a senatorial decree – and the obvious benefit to the successor of acquiring gods in the family left the process open to cynicism. Does this spiral out to touch Nero, equally cynical beneficiary of Claudius' apotheosis, or Augustus, the man with most to gain from the title *Diuus Iulius*? No text can restrain all waves of implication (though acknowledging human agency could be the basis for panegyric as much as for critique: e.g. Velleius 2.126.1; Pliny *Panegyric* 11.1–4). Yet *Apocolocyntosis* nowhere suggests

that Nero depends on his claim as "son of a god," *diui filius*: on the contrary, it writes out Claudius altogether from his claim to power. This is not to isolate Claudius as interloper in an otherwise Julian line (Kraft (1966); Wiseman (1982) 58): Caligula and Tiberius hardly look preferable. Instead *Apocolocyntosis*, like *On Clemency*, knocks out all intervening Julio-Claudians between Nero and Augustus: what matters is not so much blood relationship – nowhere mentioned – as the first emperor's exemplary value. As for Augustus' divine father Julius, he is remarkably absent from this celestial stage, lacuna notwithstanding (as from *On Clemency*: on Seneca's general ambivalence toward Julius, see Griffin (1976) 184–8; Leigh (2009)). If *Apocolocyntosis* were an attack on Julio-Claudian apotheosis taken whole, the silence would be hard to explain: here was the foundational moment of deification as power politics, the invader of his own country paraded as a god for his adoptive son's benefit. Instead Augustus, cleansed of that potential Julian blemish, is left to stand on his own merits as paradigm and justification for autocracy.

Of course Divus Augustus is caught up in the farce, both through his participation in the pseudo-epic charade of a senatorial debate, and in his speech's satirical blend of grand and comic, as he quotes his *Res Gestae* and deploys high rhetorical aposiopesis one moment (10.2), compares Claudius with a squatting dog the next (10.3). There is nothing new about this: Lucilius had given Romulus similar treatment in his satirical "Council of the Gods" (Manuwald (2009)), as the quotation in *Apoc.* 9.5 reminds us. Some critics have gone further, reading the speech as an explosion of his *auctoritas* (Alexander (1949); Jal (1957) 251–5; Wolf (1986)). Others are less convinced: to splash with satire is not to damn (Zwierlein (1982); Bringmann (1985) 899–900; Jakobi (1988)); *pudet imperii* ("I am ashamed of my power," 10.2) is the most dangerous moment (Eden (1984) 117), but not necessarily fatal (Kraft 1966: 105–6; Griffin 1976: 217 n.1; Horstkotte 1989: 345–6). Most importantly, his place among the gods is never challenged: unlike the bumbling Hercules, who fears that his own status as deified mortal is at stake in this trial (9.6), Augustus blackballs Claudius in easy security. Exposing grades of divinity must threaten instability, but the text pushes to shift that danger onto Hercules and away from Augustus.

The result is a first emperor who resembles that of *On Clemency*. In both texts he is paradigm and legitimation for the Principate, but in both he is also imperfect: Nero can be not just another Augustus but a better one. *On Clemency* combines untethered criticism of Augustus' cruelty in his youth with praise for his later conversion to clemency. Although less commendable than what Seneca urges on Nero – clemency from the start – it was thanks to this policy that "we believe him to be a god, and not because we are so commanded (*deum esse non tamquam iussi credimus*)" (*On Clemency* 1.10.3). Here is Seneca's loyalist spin on Augustus' apotheosis: no talk of ascension, but an emphasis on merit and on acceptance (Cole (2006) 180). There is an implicit contrast with deifications like that of Drusilla and Livia, instances where (from a post-Claudian standpoint) the imperial machinery had been abused, where compliance had required "belief" under orders. In elite discourse acceptance is self-fulfilling: deny it and Drusilla is not a god; agree that Augustus deserved his divinity, and he did.

Satire is generically disposed to challenge authority. Whether you give free play to every uncomfortable implication in the text, or posit some effort on the part of the author to control such implications, is an open choice. Deified Augustus stands on an

inevitably precarious pedestal, but *Apocolocyntosis*, as I read it, makes no effort to knock him off. This is not simply (or even primarily) protreptic: *Apocolocyntosis* puts far less emphasis than does *On Clemency* on holding out to Nero a future, Augustan deification. It does, however, share *On Clemency*'s concern with a wider audience. For all its surreal farce, *Apocolocyntosis* (I suggest) is selling Seneca's own brand of loyalism, a cleansed concept of deification and so of monarchy. By laughing Claudius away, *Apocolocyntosis* can sanitize as much as it satirizes imperial, Augustan apotheosis. As for Nero's future, it's early days, and a dangerous question to ask while the emperor is still alive (Caligula's appropriation of living godhead was no happy memory). Still, the boy-*princeps* is at least touched with the divine, in the challenging and crucial passage which will occupy the remainder of this chapter: the *laudes Neronis.*

Problems with Praise

As Claudius gasps his last, the action moves to the divine plane (3.1), where Mercury asks Clotho, one of the three *Parcae* (Fates), to let the old man die at last. She consents, and the narrative slips into verse as she snaps off the ugly thread of Claudius' life. But before the effect is seen on earth, 30 more hexameters describe the Parcae's wondrous weaving of a new, golden thread, at once Nero's life and the Golden Age he will bring. Apollo urges them on, prophesying the advent of this rising star, an image of the Sun and of Apollo alike. Back in prose, Clotho's sister Lachesis obliges and gives Nero long life; a trimeter from Euripides orders Claudius' burial; and, with Claudius bubbling out his life, the divine interlude is over (4.2).

The *laudes Neronis* of *Apocolocyntosis* 4.1 are remarkable, one of the most extravagant literary encomia of Nero, and of any first-century emperor, that we possess. This is already a challenge: panegyric is a fragile mode, one which makes modern readers uncomfortable. But what happens to panegyric when you put it into Menippean satire? Can these verses hold their own amid the parody which swirls around them? Then there is the style. Is this poetry bad? Is it *deliberately* bad? Often mentioned in passing as exuberant encomium, these lines have, under closer examination, provoked strong reactions. For the forthright Ball (1902: 169) "there is no sufficient artistic apology for the lines." Boatwright (1986: 10) is more nuanced but essentially in agreement: this poetry "exemplifies its period, when *indulgence in excess perverted and masked* Nero's Augustan models and much of Roman tradition" (my emphasis). Eden (1984: 75) for his part reports that the "facile elisionless flow presents expected images in formalized word-patterns with insipid blandness." But, unlike Boatwright, he credits Seneca with knowing it: this is parody, in which "the author makes his literary point by holding a mirror up to uninventive mediocrity." Is Nero in on the joke? Eden is cautious (talking only of "*literary* point"), but, in the most politically provocative reading, Robinson (2005: 252–4) seizes on "the exaggerated encomiastic imagery that [*Apoc.* 4.1] mechanically assembles" to conclude that an already disenchanted Seneca is satirizing his panegyric at Nero's expense.

These critics are in broad agreement on one point, that the hexameters of *Apoc.* 4.1 are stylistically inept (for a rare but unsubstantiated defense, see Nussbaum (2009) 101–2). Before addressing this, let me consider two other sticking-points: panegyric and genre. Robinson's skepticism accords with a trend in recent decades of redeeming

distasteful encomia by imputing political satire. Flattery of Nero has attracted ample attention: Lucan's proem, Lucillius' epigrams, Calpurnius Siculus, and the Einsiedeln *Eclogues* – all have been suspected of overloaded praise. In the case of *Apocolocyntosis* such "subversion" seems at once less and more likely. Less likely because of all these literary products it originates closest to the emperor himself: can you really imagine Nero, a native speaker of Latin and practiced poet, failing to spot satire which seems so evident to a modern critic relying on our second-hand grasp of language and artistry? On the other hand, the generic context is uniquely threatening to a "straight" reading. Not only is Menippean satire the destabilizing genre *par excellence*, this one actually features a scene of false poetic praise. As Claudius listens to the funeral dirge celebrating his valor, physical excellence, and justice, the ironies are deafening – to everyone except him (12.3–13.1). The structure of *Apocolocyntosis* encourages comparison of that scene of "praise" (*laudibus*, 13.1) with the "excessive praise" of the Parcae (*nimis . . . laudant*, 4.1.18) as they spin Nero's thread: these are by far the two longest verse sections (of the five which punctuate the satire), and are symmetrically placed, articulating Claudius' ascent to heaven and descent to hell (Weinreich (1923) 132; Korzeniewski (1982) 103–8). What is more, four of those five verse sections introduce high style only to deflate it: the long-winded poetic descriptions of time and season (2.1 and 2.4), the parody of Seneca's own *Hercules Furens* in the mouth of buffoon Hercules (7.2), and the absurd mock-epic ecphrasis on Claudius' temporary eternal damnation as a latter-day Danaid (15.1) all conspire, like the funeral dirge, to drag their verses down into the mud of the framing prose. Can we shelter the *laudes Neronis*, uniquely, from the same fate?

One approach, necessarily circular but not therefore illegitimate, is simply to say "yes." Here critics as disparate as Weinreich (1923: 37) and Relihan (1993: 82) can agree: *Apoc.* 4.1 is exceptional, as Seneca bends the generic rules to fit praise of Nero into the anarchy of his satire. Seen another way, it is wholly *un*exceptional within the thrust of *Apocolocyntosis* as a whole, which insistently contrasts counterexemplary Claudius with wonder-boy Nero. Whereas the praise of Claudius at his funeral is demonstrably false within the "truth" of the satire (his swiftness of foot in 12.3.6–7, for instance, is contradicted by the jokes at his lameness in 1.2 and 5.2), that of Nero is not. Of course this is partly because Nero is not mentioned outside this scene, but even in the encomium Seneca leaves few hostages to fortune: along with the vague promise of happy times to come, he includes no specifics beyond youth, beauty, and vocal prowess, safe enough material for this teenager. As for the prose/verse divide, it is less sharp than critics suggest. Claudius' death occupies not only the surrounding prose but also the first two verses, ugly in content but as elegant in style as what follows. Equally, the spinning of Nero's life fills not just 30 hexameters, but also the first line or two of the prose which comes after: "So Apollo. And Lachesis, since she too liked the wonderfully fair fellow, gave generously and bestowed on Nero many years from her own supply. As for Claudius . . ." (4.2). According to Eden (1984: 79), the "sudden drop in stylistic level . . . pricks the pretended seriousness of the verse." But it surely does quite the opposite, as prose affirms in its own idiom the sentiment of the verse: Nero of the "fair thread" (*formoso . . . filo*, 4.1.9), Apollo's equal in beauty, becomes a "wonderfully fair fellow" (*homini formossisimo*); Lachesis is as unstinting here as she and her sisters were in the hexameters. Low prose and high verse conspire in their mythologized variation on the theme *vivat rex*: exuberant praise is not confined to the vulnerable casing of poetry.

None of this means that Seneca's poetry cannot intend *literary* parody. A combination of irreverence (towards panegyrists) and reverence (towards the emperor) would be an attractive blend of wit and encomium. But is it fair of Eden *et al.* to call these verses insipid, indulgent, inexcusable? The passage has perhaps suffered from the common assumption that *Apocolocyntosis* was a hasty squib to amuse a small (and drunk?) audience. It is easy to dismiss ephemeral poetry as bad – but even if this satire *were* ephemeral, that would make a poor criterion for aesthetic judgment. What happens if we approach this as potentially rich, seriously intended verse? Boatwright (1986) is one result, a useful if sometimes naïve assessment of stylistic specifics. One of those is repetition, about which Seneca is remarkably blasé. Sometimes it is pointed, as when the phrases *stamina fuso* (vv. 1, 13) and *tempora uitae* (vv. 2, 21) describe the contrasting fates of Claudius and Nero. Other instances are less easy to explain: *pensa*, for instance, occurs three times within 10 lines (vv. 7, 11, 16). *Pensum* is a pregnant term, meaning literally "weighed out portion of raw wool for spinning" and metaphorically "task" (hence v.11 *sunt dulcia pensa*, "their wool/task is delightful"), perhaps also evoking through etymology (*pendere*, "weigh") the Homeric image of Zeus balancing the scales of Fate (Onians (1954) 409–10). A rich word, then, but is this nevertheless a case of "monotonous repetition" (Eden (1984) 76)?

Caution is necessary: we cannot assume that ancient poets uniformly shared our modern preference for avoiding repetition unless it serves an immediate rhetorical purpose (Wills (1996) 473–7). Ovid, for instance, is often tolerant of such "unmarked" repetition, to the point of allowing *undas* to end three lines out of eleven in *Heroides* 19 (Kenney (1996) 24, 103–4). Seneca's nephew Lucan is notorious for it (Housman (1926) xxxiii), and Seneca himself is permissive in his tragedies, not just at the level of individual words: a still-influential study comments on the "sameness of style or expression which is disagreeable alike to the mind and the ear" (Canter (1925) 76). We can scarcely presume, then, that Seneca shared the judgment of some modern critics about the deficient taste of his age. Yet the abundance of repetition here may lend itself to a more positive explanation. As the Parcae spin their longest ever thread, the poetry responds with conspicuous excess, not (I suggest) as grotesquerie, but in an eloquent and witty marriage of matter and manner.

Nero's hexameters are defined by excess from the triple description of Lachesis' hair in their opening lines (*comas . . . capillos . . . | crinem*, three synonyms for "hair," vv. 3–4) to the flowing locks of Apolline Nero in the last (*affuso . . . capillo*, v. 32): length and abundance ring-composes the passage. It goes well beyond the repetition of single words, or the strangely similar pair of "golden" lines (vv. 9 and 13), or even the piled-up star and sun similes (vv. 25–9): the most striking redundance is the spinning of Nero's thread itself. This is not just unstoppable: it happens three times. First the Parcae spin a thread which surpasses the proverbially long lives of mythical mortals Tithonus and Nestor (v. 14), and the job seems done. Yet Apollo now appears (v. 15) and as he enchants the Parcae, the thread spontaneously surpasses a mortal span (v. 20) – again. Still Apollo encourages them: "may he surpass the length of mortal life" (*uincat mortalis tempora uitae*, v. 21). But this has now been achieved twice already, and with the same verb (*uincunt . . . uincunt*, v. 14). Finally, as we have seen, the return to prose sees Lachesis generously allocating long life to Nero (4.2). *Three* times, then, the Parcae assure Nero's longevity: the threefold description of Lachesis' hair is matched by the

triple performance at the loom. This protraction – producing by some way the longest set of verses in *Apocolocyntosis* – is hard to miss, and does more than simply bulk up the praise (*pace* Weinreich (1923) 49). Excess is inscribed at the level of word and phrase as it is in the content. Seneca's praise does not *risk* being too expansive, it *is* abundantly and obviously over-generous: exceptional praise for an exceptional boy. "The work hastens on of its own accord" (*sponte sua festinat opus*, v. 12): like the thread, Seneca's verses spin themselves in a poetical performance of the scene. Whether this is clever or cruel, praise or parody, depends inevitably on the rhetorical-political agenda of the reader. But mockery is not the only reading available.

Given the lack of Senecan hexameters outside *Apocolocyntosis*, we can gain only a crude sense of his tastes and what he does or does not intend to be remarkable. Nevertheless, these verses deserve a more serious reading. Like style, content cannot be dismissed as "hackneyed," *pace* Boatwright (1986: 15 n.20), certainly not in terms of reworking earlier literature. The picture of the spinning Fates (and the rare word *subte(g)mina*, 4.1.5) inevitably recalls Catullus 64.305–83, mediated by Virgil's prophecy of a new Golden Age, begun in *Eclogues* 4 and turned to Augustan panegyric in the *Aeneid*. Where Virgil fantasized about sheep spontaneously turning their fleeces into expensive shades of yellow and red (*Eclogues* 4.44–7), Seneca takes that *automaton* motif and brings it to the mythological sphere: it is the very thread of Nero's life that turns to gold of its own accord – not so much absurd (Merfeld (1999) 64–5) as witty, the sort of repetition with variation taken as normal in "serious" Latin poetry. Meanwhile the scenario, as Apollo beguiles the spinning Parcae, recalls not *Eclogues* 4 but *Georgics* 4, where Clymene delights the nymphs with her song as their spin their *mollia pensa* ("soft wool," *Georgics* 4.348–9). This cursory glance already suggests a complex fusion – an excess, even – of literary resources.

So too the imagery of Nero as Phoebus, at once Apollo and Sun. Seneca marshals well-developed tropes of ruler panegyric, famous not least from Augustan iconography (Bergmann (1998) 99–126 and in this volume; Miller (2009)), but to novel effect. Like Augustus and others, Nero is compared to a sun or star (as he is in *On Clemency* 1.3.3 and 1.8.4, but here with poetry's mythological apparatus). Yet at the same time he is not just associated, but actually fused, with Apollo *citharoedus*, the long-haired, lyre-strumming god of youth, peace, and art: Nero is the *formosissimus* (*Apoc.* 4.2) match for *formosus Apollo* (Virgil, *Eclogues* 4.57). This imagery overload climaxes in the final verses (4.1.30–2):

> talis Caesar adest, talem iam Roma Neronem
> aspiciet. flagrat nitidus fulgore remisso
> uultus et affuso ceruix formosa capillo.

> such a Caesar is at hand, such a Nero Rome will soon behold. His shining face burns with gentle glow, and his shapely neck with spreading hair.

Nero has the winning, paradoxical combination of burning astral divinity (the celestial resonance of *fulgore*, "glow," continues the star simile of vv. 25–9) and mild youth (the *fulgor* is *remissus*, "gentle"). But he is Apollo too, as the final vision of his "shapely neck" and "spreading hair" makes clear. Striking language points the conceit. The zeugma

with *flagrat* strangely makes Nero's neck "burn," a point underlined by *affuso*: this word, never elsewhere used of hair, more usually describes a color or glow "spreading" (*On Anger* 2.1.2; *On Benefits* 4.11.6; *Letters* 11.3). Solar glow and Apolline tresses are mysteriously intertwined in words as in image. Whether Nero's hair really was shoulder-length is beside the point (*pace* Champlin (2003) 279–80): Apollo's hair, symbol of youth (Nisbet and Hubbard (1970) 255) and peace (Maltby (2002) 435), combines in conscious paradox with the rising sun to encapsulate Nero's unique position as the youngest emperor ever to accede, and one who had fought no civil war to achieve it. Nero already outshines his model Augustus; Seneca for his part does not leave Augustan poetry unchallenged. None of this need rule out literary, or political, play – but "oppositional" subversion is not the only way to validate these hexameters' performance.

Conclusion

Menippean satire is a tricky beast, on which no interpretative strait jacket will sit comfortably. *Apocolocyntosis* will always fight, squirm, evade. What I have offered here is one possible reading of Seneca's skit as political script for a new autocracy. Claudius is ejected not only from heaven but from the mechanism of imperial self-legitimation, as Nero is divinely established as rightful and needed monarch. Satire serves its political end: Seneca entertains and instructs not just his teenage master but the Roman elite at large. *Apocolocyntosis* takes us to the heart of the Neronian accession, strips apotheosis down to its essentials, and generates conceptual space for a potential future *diuus*. No mere jesting, this is imperial politics pure: Nero has risen.

FURTHER READING

The bibliography on *Apocolocyntosis* is extensive, much of it short notes debating textual cruces, the meaning of jokes, and the title. Eden (1984) is the standard Anglophone text and commentary; Griffin (1976) remains definitive on Seneca seen whole (129–33 on *Apoc.*). Critical reviews of earlier work are provided by Coffey (1961) and Motto and Clark (1989) 40–5, 242–8. Lana and Malaspina (2005) is awkward but comprehensive, and can be searched online at www.senecana.it. Substantial English-language contributions since Eden: Boatwright (1986) on *Apoc.* 4.1, Nauta (1987) and Versnel (1993b) on Saturnalia (with Versnel (1993a) 113–227 for the broader context); Rudich (1987) and (1997) 36–43 on *Apocolocyntosis* as palinode; Leach (1989) and Robinson (2005) on subversion; Riikonen (1987) and Relihan (1993) 75–90 on Menippean satire; Braund (1993) and Braund and James (1998) on political denigration; O'Gorman (2005) on quotation; Cole (2006) on apotheosis; Nussbaum (2009) on Stoic humor; Paschalis (2009b) on epic allusion; Damon (2010) on historiography. For ancient reception, see section headed "Who's Laughing Anyway?" above; Courtney (2004).

German debate has concentrated on political meaning. Earlier work is summarized in Bringmann (1985). Weinreich's (1923) commentary remains valuable; Lund (1994) is focused on linguistic and textual problems. Wolf's (1986) argument that an ironic Seneca damns Augustus and Principate alike is spectacularly demolished by Jakobi (1988). Merfeld (1999) 49–70 reads *Apoc.* 4 as paraenetic parody; for English summary and critique, see Dewar (2003). Other recent contributions include Schmitzer (2000), Dobesch (2002) and Heil (2006).

Some oddities have appeared in Italian: Rodríguez-Almeida (1996a) and (1996b) argues badly for Flavian dating; Gamba (2000) 11–45 believes Seneca was Christian. The commentary of

Russo (1985), however, is very useful, and the slim Vannini (2008) helpful for recent bibliography; Roncali (1990) is the standard Latin text for many continental scholars.

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CHAPTER 10

The *Carmina Einsidlensia* and Calpurnius Siculus' *Eclogues*

John Henderson

Carmina Einsidlensia

Recently arrived at the University of Berne, the young lecturer Hermann Hagen searched through a hybrid thirteenth- or fourteenth-century manuscript in the monastery library at nearby Einsiedeln methodically enough to register the contents of pp. 206–7 (which are listed in the catalogue entry as "Idyllia duo"). Bound in together with all manner of carefully preserved bits and bobs, these are two otherwise unknown Latin pastoral poems, and thanks to the library's generosity, you can now readily inspect for yourself in color on the website: http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/doubleview/sbe/0266/206, the two relevant tenth-century pages 206–07 of Stiftsbibliothek Einsiedeln, *Codex* 266 (1296), along with full details of the whole parchment. Since Hagen (1869) announced his find, the *Einsiedeln Eclogues* ("EE") have traditionally tacked onto the *Eclogues* of Calpurnius Siculus (with or without the *Laus Pisonis*), as products of the honeymoon period of Nero's reign, along with Seneca's skit *Apocolocyntosis*, with which this assortment has a skein of common threads and tempting responsions.

In the course of trimming to fit the physical book the first poem has lost the top portion of the titulature on p. 206 (perhaps a whole line missing above the decapitated line giving the cast of characters), and then on p. 207 has lost a whole line after 1.41 plus the first four feet of v. 43 (where enough of the tail of a letter survives to show that the commonly accepted supplement can't be right). The second poem starts right away after 1.48, fitting its dramatis personae into the space to right of the first line, and manages to squeeze in the rest of the poem plus a terminal "*FINIT*" at the foot of the page. Pressure to economize on space is palpable, two verses generally sharing a line (which suits perfectly the two songs in 14 lines each at 1.19–35 and 36–49, and the solo revelation at 2.15–38), and run-over words squeezed into spaces free after

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adjacent lines. The result is that two sides of 25 lines each fit the pair of texts to their two pages exactly; the cost is some acrobatics on the first page, where too lavish a left margin for speaker-attribution obliges a welter of run-over wordage. The scribe tries to fit his lines with the speakers' turns, so that Thamyris' vv. 1–2 and Midas' 3–4 double up to occupy a line each (as do Ladas' 13–14 and Thamyras' 15–16), but Thamyris' v. 5 is permitted a whole line on its own and Ladas' 4–9, Thamyras' 10–12, and Midas' 19–21 wreak havoc – to the point where v. 21 must become a second run-over to the run-over Lada | of v. 20, tucked in above our v. 18. In 2.1–14 the scribe found room for 46 verses in his 25 lines, with very few such accommodatory lunges, by giving up the attempt to start new turns on new lines: but the sharing of lines between speakers in vv. 1 and 4–6 – unknown to Latin pastoral elsewhere, so markedly genre-stretching – ruled this out from the top, and caused the one pile-up on the page, at v. 6 where the scribe wrongly marked a change of speaker at the main caesura and inserted the second half of the verse in the space in the line above, i.e. after v. 3. The craftsman-draughtsman's blend of design with improvisation looks to be trained on framing the two poems on the two pages, whole; be that as it may, the manuscript betrays no sign of incompleteness in the ending of either composition. See for yourself.

Our last chance for ascription to an author was lost in the trimming; for date of composition, these Roman poems hail a Caesar, triangulated together with Troy and *hoc opus* (1.39, "this work"), and a golden age, distanced from Sulla and civil war/s (2.32–4). Otherwise there are intertextual echoes ranging from paraded directives to work away from Virgilian passages – from *Eclogues* ("VE"), *Georgics* ("VG") and *Aeneid* ("VA") – to evocation of Tibullus, Ovid, Manilius and other classics, and juicy Neronian parallels with Calpurnius' bucolic poetry ("CS") and Lucan's *Bellum Civile* epic ("BC"). The poems are done few favors in the scholarship, so I'm going to town on them, up first.

Beholding the parchment presses the poetry on us as evocative *presencing*, working with the conventions of a genre which characteristically poses text as pretend momentaneous utterance between interactive voices caught in their will-o'-the-wisp less-than-15-minutes of airplay (see Alpers (1996)). This not-yet-laureate milieu is for lads, for novices; brief skits, lightweight poems; away at the horizons of empire, cityscape, history, challenging readers to participate against all odds in representation specially designed to finesse real-time scales of importance, values, ways to be (see Saunders (2008)). The rustic nobodies stage an other, defamiliarized, scene for getting things said so we can't miss what's happening, to underscore the effort to represent, in both senses. What they are to say what they do their way is, or should be, up front for us. Let's see.

EE1 trades on our internalization of the dynamic of competitive song triggered by altercation and formalized by appointment of a judge. The invitation is specially inviting: hits all the right complimentary notes, an "art"-ful "ear"-ful chime of beauty, pleasure, undisturbed play (. . . *aurem* |, 2 ~ *artem* |, 4). They are there already, we missed the friction phase (1–2). They are there already, the judge approves the secluded venue (3–4). As we expect from VE3 (see esp. Henderson (1999) for what follows: CE and CS both dwell in the shadow of Virgil, and this poem is their home base), haggling over the stake, which will push their valuation of their song on us for cashing out in our reckoning of the worth of our poem for us, racks up the tension while the players make fun of each other to make fun for us. The prize talks, a lasting pledge of their *bona*

fide artistry: billy-goat with white flash on the forehead versus jazzy keyed pipe, take your pick. Both would do, do them proud, but Thamyras realizes from the insinuating brag of opponent Ladas that "the story attached to the pipe's history as *quite some* gift" from the woodland deity Faunus delivers a put-down gibe (*munus memorabile*, 12, cf. Tibullus 2.1.57–8, where the "alpha male goat" – Greek *tragos* – offering for Bacchus is the one that put the originary "trag-" in "trag-edy"). We share his insight that the original musician Thamyras blindly took on Apollo and the Muses and lost – lost his eyesight, and with it the certainty that the names make the omens a dead cert of a replay – since the original cloth-head verdict of Midas as judge of a musical showdown was against Apollo's guitar and in favor of the pipe of Pan (Greek for Faunus).

Ladas, whose namesake was a fleetfooted (= "Dappled Deer") but non-musical repeat Olympic victor (immortalized, for his death on the way to his bus-top reception by a marble masterpiece by Myron: Matthews (2007)), sidesteps Thamyras' call of his insinuation by branding the race no contest (*only* another Midas would score another Thamyras ahead and, as they soon confirm, let Ladas' self-accompaniment on Apolline guitar go twang, 15–18). This he wishes waved away deplored as "crazy talk" evasion by filibuster; but our precious moment will not be lost, he determines, sneaking in by way of compliment to the judge the request to listen to his heart. But Thamyras still knows his win is in the bag because he has his head screwed on – not because *he*'s flattered the judge (which was where we came in, 1) – but because this singer sings songs of praise for Caesar, and that's the no-brainer smart bid. It works, see, it "always" does, has, and will (metapoetic cue at 16, *semper*).

So this move was already right now starting the game, before the off. It does duty for the opening gambit within the bout proper of getting the Almighty's backing (VE3.60–61); and the counter supplies the reflex parry "*Apollo* is with me" (*et mi . . . Cynthius*, 12 ~ VE3.62, *et me Phoebus*), to see the logically unmatchable eternal supremo (= Caesar) with specially heartfelt rapport with music, through allegiance to Apollo, whose own lips prompt Ladas' to sing over the strumming he has won praise for already, and means so to do anew right now: ever-changing re-invention always does top off performance, and this singer nails experience for his side. He'll do it different some more, as he already is. The judge starts proceedings, in fine, elaborately Virgilian, style (19–21 ~ VE3.55–9). So next they'll bring it on head-to-head, with the charm stakes bragging, followed by the rest of the country blues repertoire of sugar daddy flash, fan-base boasts and hokum innuendo. But no, the anticipated exchange of rapidfire – "amoebaean" blow and counter-blow – does *not* materialize. Instead, having jumped the gun, they never do get past the invocations. They take just the one turn each, and then we are done.

What from Midas was formula, "god bless both you singers singing" (20), they act out, with Ladas first praising Apollo, differently, with a variation on traditional themes that conjures up a performer performing the perfect – divine – set through the present tour de force, before Thamyras takes up the baton by hailing the epiphany of an Apollo here with us now, humbling and wiping out the whole tradition of Graeco-Roman poetry. Take the electricity generated by two (more) artists in their element and on their mettle, and give them the twinkling of an eye in which to come up with matching and dovetailing Apolline visions of power realized through guitar and voice: they volunteer to take on the ultimate topic, unfazed, and – do these yokels duly make the inevitable botch up, charming, ludicrous, dwarfed, or . . . what? Or do these folkies somehow swim

way out of their depth, and even pull off the impossible feat? Easy for *them* to see, and *call*, ruler "god" (from where they grovel, with their limited lexicon). The maximized mismatch between stand-in author(s) and their ambition/commission is what gives bucolic mimesis its traditional self-dramatizing power, not least in this variation.

Ladas grapples with the latest swish cosmological speculations from higher astro-philosophistry to envision a mystic *soupçon* of revelation: feel the divine monoprinciple called Apollo, combining cosmogonic chords of Virgilian almightiness with Sibylline prophetic mantra, realized through this song and its riff, . . . Heavenly Logos-cum-Solar Disc, . . . in and as their worthy manifestation in human form, stood tall, radiant and royal, toting thunder, . . . like the Creator Demiurge of gurus from Pythagoras through Posidonius and Seneca, whose strings played art into zones of existence unified into one symphony of love, . . . like the Apollo of myth from Homer through Callimachus and Ovid, "Paean" who "struck" the serpent at Delphi and fathered the victory-song (or paean, *paiô* = "strike" in Greek), which is commemorated by every guitar-picking *plectrum* (= "striker" in Greek) up to and now including Ladas' (would-be) bid for glory. These noises, he exclaims in rapture, are and must be the heavenly voices of heaven. Some limited lexicon, this!

Came shimmer of scales, and in response there was summoned up a throng, the jazzy keyed chorus of those sisters steeped in all the forms and bodies of wisdom borne through art, the art of modulation. The classically trained voices that *get* what shaped this song of Apollo, designed to gather in Cosmocracy under any name – and salt it away before Thamyras can get a word in edgeways. Not Power versus Art, then, but Art is Power: get out of that, pal. Enter the Muses (v. 35) – and Thamyras, swooping down to join in, take over the dance (v. 36), summoning these Muses to join the wealth of poesie, here and now, in, and on, Apollo's epiphany. What *can* the team come up with now? The ecstatic mode of revelation delivers another figure of Apollo, through animation of his "work," here it comes, a tale of "Troy's Fall" for Troy to tell, of tragic doom and redemption through the compensation of revival and rebuild in the sacred etiology of Rome. The holiest theme for the descendant of "razed" Troy to "raise" to the stars – cathartic exultation conjured from genocidal extinction by another Virgil-and-Aeneas-in-one (*tolle*, 37, *tollit*, 41 – a pun sneered at by Lucan at BC6.48–9).

Vindicating the empire as pious righting of wrong done mother-city Troy is the mission set for Roman heroes by forefather Anchises in VA6's Sibyl-guided centrepiece (838–40, *eruet ille Argos* Agamemnoniasque Mycenas . . . *ultus auos Troiae templa et temerata Mineruae*, "HE shall ruinate Argos/Agamemnon's Mycenae, avenging Troy's ancestors/Minerva's sullied shrines," cf. 1.284 ~ EE1.39). Evocation of this poet creator who next turns destroyer summons up more personages to join the party, the shade first, of Homer, to take his hat off to our divine singer's divine earful, and crown him instead, for refashioning the *Iliad* epic into Trojan triumph way beyond time-expired Homer's ken. Thamyras is here to win, too. He makes plain that full-bearded and white-haired, white-templed Homer, plenipotent dispenser of distinction upon the deserved new maestro, makes sure the prize awarded to t/his *alumnus* of Troy responds with that prime stake, the goat of tragedy. The pledge was to found his song in subject-matter, and his Apollo's topic of Homer's Troy-into-Virgilian Rome is so founded, in the identity of *his* "Apollo" singer: heads up the crowned "person of Caesar" (47, *Caesareum . . . caput*), as promised, now revealed by Homer's relocation of

the white flash of ribbon to "veil" *his* forehead. And the cap fits, too, at least as tight as Faunus' gift of Pan pipe to . . . the winner.

One thing, however, *is* (I warned) destroyed in the process, and it is a song of songs. Backgrounded here, sticking close by Homer, close as *Aeneid* to *Iliad*, stands Mantua, mantic home of Virgil, lips as potent as the forerunner, but directly challenged on their own ground by the new kid on the block, our nouveau Trojan teller of Troy. Stories of the death of Virgil wanted him to try and burn his unfinishable epic, but if he'd heard the new Apollo steal his thunder, the *Aeneid* had truly had it, with the only consolation that a greater rival had come up with a better song on the same lines. On this note, with the suggestion that someone else's song had tried and failed, closure is over-achieved. Result: deletion. Thamyris even folds *pastness* into the presentedness of his vision, by adding on this supplementary surreal tailpiece that narrates result into performance. Curtains for Ladas, he claims, and hopes that does the trick.

But if you insist on walking into the part of playing Midas, as if a (syncratic) decision is required, your choice will be between two rival bids to drum up a storm by revealing the Apollo of Apollos. The first works through syncretic glomeration of (Greek) images of theurgy and the second through syncritic acclamation of (Roman) earth-bound performance through specific incarnation. Or: there is no call to choose at all, since Singer 1 offered Caesar through the figure of Apollo, while Singer 2's Apollo was figured through "worthy" personalization as (a) Caesar. Either way(s), these lads land us with a full-on diptych of hype and overkill that none of us would ever dream of taking, let alone staking reputation, on. It wouldn't mean the same if we tried, or did. It couldn't.

Here's a "Caesar" who stands, beyond the mimetic sketch, for the poem's target to impress and, in that sense, the arbiter of success. If we are any judge, the vigor of the work of representation will be decisive. To catch historical traction through specificity, we have a *Caesar* to impress with music and poetry, with identification as/with Apollo; an Apollo-on-earth responsible for an *opus* intimated through "this" take-off (*hoc*, 38), as the incineration of Troy, tragic in tone, and specially identifying its empathetic writer as a Caesar self-cast as another Aeneas, a celebrant of the lost mothership. All this fits *Nero*, the Trojan who wrote heroic *Troica* (Juvenal 8.221, Dio 62.29.1), in particular, *by* AD 64, a "Sack of Troy" (*Halosis Iliou = Troianum Excidium*, cf. Suetonius, *Nero* 38.2; Tacitus, *Annals* 15.39; Dio 62.18.1).

Special emphasis on Nero's Julian descent through his mother Agrippina had featured before he succeeded Claudius, and the ultimate conceit that the compensatory emergence of a new emperor made catastrophic *Untergang* worthwhile was a feature of accession propaganda, as for Trajan (Pliny, *Panegyricus* 6.2, *prope est ut exclamem tanti fuisse*, "close to me yelling it was worth it" ~ 40, *iam tanti cecidisse fuit*, "the fall was, instantly, worth it"), as well as (in)famously emblazoned across Lucan's Neronian *Bellum Civile* proem (1.33–66, esp. 37–8, *scelera ista nefasque | hac mercede placent*, "those crimes of internecine abomination get my vote on these terms," cf. 5.654–60 on Julius', and Seneca, *Natural Questions* 2.59.12 for anyone's, suchlike egomania). A teenage Lucan, 15 at Nero's accession in AD 54, had been just *too* young to join in and splash; but in my view, just as his opening book seizes on the doom of repetition pathology in civil war wielded by Virgil to bless the first inauguration of the Caesars' empire (VG1.489–514 ~ BC1.7, 38, 680, 694), so he made full (mis)use of the effusion of coronation acclamation written by those who were there for the boy emperor, when he finally

came to compose his own soured response to Nero's visitation upon earth, through the catastrophic *Untergang* of the Republic that originally made (Julius) "Caesar" the master signifier of autocratic power in Latin. (Thus the proem's juggle of roles for Nero between Jupiter and Apollo, 1.47–8, *seu te . . . Phoebi*, "or you, Phoebus," shoots down EE1. 22–3, . . . *seu tibi, Phoebe*, "or you, Phoebus," with shades of Phaethon.) Civil war a worthwhile price for Nero, and so now a fitting epigraph and starter for the *Bellum Civile*? If we were looking for Nero's honeymoon – EE1 fits the bill well enough. EE2 can confirm the picture, and pin the poems to the very outset of the reign.

This time the dynamics are the opposite of gung-ho. Pastoral characters are brought on to speak, perchance to sing. Not to think, to brood. When VE9 sent a brace of characters down its broadway into town, bright spark Lycidas kept egging ageing Moeris to lighten the trek with snatches from all over their repertoire, with precious little success, then total shut-down: there "Moeris' silence was him trying to remember" (37, *tacitus . . . mecum ipse uoluto*), but "his age and *the* age are carrying everything off including his mind" (51), preoccupied by anxieties pending decision on the fate of their valley in the post-civil-war settlement. But in EE2 "Glyceranus," = any old "sweetie," crowds his comrade "Mystes," = "the initiate," even, as we noted, to the point of making him – them – share verses. They are so shockingly out of synch, he has a job worming a blood-from-stone word out of the weirdo, beyond the riddle that *his* "silence" represents anxiety in the midst of "*success*" (1, *quid tacitus . . .*, 3, *laetis*).

The other blanks, and gets blocked. Trouble with the flock? No, nothing to worry the dogs. Not precautionary? Something in the air, then? Wrong. The worries disturbing Mystes' happiness are – in part, below the surface, latent – in a word, "satisfaction" (8, *satias*). No, *not* spoiled brat lazybones ennui moaning for moaning's sake; this non-communication has an etiology. Another ideal spot – for Mystes to spill, uninterrupted. No song, this, but for sooth, *didaxis*. For those with eyes to see, the secret is there in the vista: watch the hamlet community come together to celebrate their annual festival, with wild polyrhythms, ritual dancing, happy woodwind music. In their realized Tibullan idyllic dreamscape of fair Peace (see 1.10, 2.1), these quarrel-free kids must attest the golden age vowed by Virgil's Menalcas (VE5.65–80). Plain to even a (sweet) bovine brain. Olden times are back, and olden ways. Harvests safe, wine maturing, herds free to pasture, and "towns unwalled" (VE4.32). Missing from the view, what *makes* it, is landscape fouled by the "unspeakable" perversions that are civil war (28, *tacenda*). Mere eyesight is blind to the defining absence, but Mystes already echoes the arch-Virgilian nightmare scene of devastation ahead in civil war announced by the baleful comet upon Caesar's assassination: "so many wars multiplying over the planet, montages of crime – the *plough* dishonored, untilled ploughland a tip, sickle into *swords*" (VG1.505–08, . . . *aratro* | . . . *ensem* |). All this Mystes rewinds, to capture lads, "stripped" for work à la Hesiod, just the way Virgil prescribed (1.299 ~ 30): "busy digging the ploughland: domesticated for the *plough*, and so unused to *swords* they gawp at them decorating the walls in their forefathers' homes" (EE2.30–1, . . . *aratro* |, . . . *ensem* |). Next he evokes the entire story of this banished sequence of "Rome dying's endgame," from Sulla Felix through the "tripartite time/storm" of hopelessness and sell-out. (Three's a cloud, cf. BC1.84–6, 98–111). The mystic mind sees instead a present of fertility "unfarmed," "safe seas," "lions leashed," and "tigers tamed" (VE4.18, 31, 22; and big cats: VE5.27, 29).

His Virgil has now unwound, right back to that first book's paraded return of "old times/ways," back that is in VE4's annunciation of "Saturn's primeval peace returned to earth, with Virgin Justice," already parade-quoted at v. 23, *Saturni rediere dies Astraeaque uirgo* (VE4.6, *iam redit et Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna*, "The Virgin's return, Saturn's reign returned"). Back there and then in early Virgil came the Sibylline promise, the advent poem-child on its way, new innocence to begin rolling back the degradation of decadent civilization towards nature reclaimed before the fall. This topic fit to burst bucolic, returning a century later, comes true this time, here, now. Scrolling back VE4, as it had foretold, to its top line: *casta faue Lucina: tuus iam regnat Apollo* |, "Pure Goddess of Childbirth, bless us: your Apollo's reign is NOW" (38 = VE4.10). Yes, EE2's end is right where Virgilding began. No more to be said or done.

True, *within* the whole-verse quote, *verbatim* and entire, the prayer is pregnant: for the boy child twinkling in Virgil's mind's eye is now become Apollo regnant, so where the goddess Lucina before had her work cut out to deliver on the baby, and all the song's burden of promise, "her" boy is all grown up now, and Virgil's triumviral vision realized in maturing empire. Whether or not "Sweetie Pie" followed this through, you'll have to guess. Whether you've understood what's bugging "The Mystic" is what counts far more. Did you, like most who have written down their response, drink in this tale of joy unconfined but do you wait still, in vain, to hear tell of those "cares"? Try putting EE's two endings together: one destroying the *Aeneid*, the other reviving the *Eclogues*' grandest, loudest, oyez. As a pair, then, the poems twin a great double whammy of bucolic amoebaean and monologue.

They leave the singers of the New Age celebrating their boy Caesar who writes his own epic of Trojan Rome; and then, if we trace back to where pastoral launched its kid writer up to teaching his new emperor's world the arts of peace before he finally took the ultimate commission to write his Caesar the resurgence of Troy as Rome, we'll unravel the classic opera back to the mightiest heave he could dare in pastoral (VE4.1, *paulo maiora*, "themes *slightly* grander"), and within that find the future envisaged as unraveling, back through zero to break-on-through to the millennium. And now nirvana's here; it's done. But get to the promised land, and farsighted covenanters are through. The poet who gives last word to last century's herald is foreclosing on following up the New Start for himself. Job done. Whatever *other* "melancholies" might be tempering Mystes' joie de vivre (see Heil 2008 and, for volumes, Fuchs 1958), premature fulfillment of promise has already granted him just the one self-paralyzing borrowed plume, all it takes to reach and tip past "satisfaction" to "saturation."

Could there be a more ironic *finis* to a début?

Calpurnius Siculus, *Eclogues*

Here we have an author's name ("CS"), but otherwise very much the same set of disputed clues to historical niche as for EE. Indeed *very* much the same set, unsurprisingly given the degree of mutual intrication between these twin excursions in pastoral, the first post-Virgilian outings we know of (apart from the enigmatic figure in Ovid's valedictory roll-call of the Late Augustan "B" list . . . , *Ex Ponto* 4.16.33, . . . *Tityron antiquas Passerque rediret ad herbas*, "plus Passer – "Goldfinch" – returning to Tityrus, reviving pastures ancient").

The overlaps are displayed, no less: as when CS's grandest, central, poem opens with its Meliboeus probing: *quid tacitus, Corydon*? ("Why mum, Corydon?," 4.1 ~ EE2.1), and the first poem's internal response to its featured *tour de force* at the out-turn captures psychopathological complexity to match Mystes' contemplation: *iamdudum . . . mixtus subit inter gaudia terror* | ("Since way back, horror supervenes blended between one joy and the next," 1.89–90 ~ EE2.1–2, 9, *curae mea gaudia turbant*: | *cura . . . magis inter pocula surgit* |, . . . *satias mea gaudia uexat* |, "Cares muddy my moments of joy: care rises between one glass and the next, . . . having plenty mugs my moments of joy"). Scholarly attention has indeed concentrated on the intermeshed pointers toward a Neronian matrix for both graph(emat)ic tableaux (1.77, *cernitis ut . . .*, "see how" ~ EE2.15, *cernis ut . . .*, "see how"): before/above all, the message from beyond, courtesy of Faunus, predicting imminent return of the golden age of fair Virgilian-Tibullan Peace (43, *redit . . .* | *alma Themis . . .*, *altera Saturni . . . regna*, "Fostering Justice returned, second reign of Saturn" ~ EE2.23 enmeshed with VE4.6; 1.54, *candida Pax aderit*, "Bright Peace will come" ~ Tibullus 1.10.45), and ruling out civil war by recourse to the same anti-model of Julius Caesar's comet as the first *Georgic*'s harbinger of civil war. According to that same logic Faunus advertises his Julian successor's arrival as New Age emperor, and sets up Lucan's programmatic hailing of Nero as payback for both Caesars' cycle of repeating civil wars, and more. In the loudly over-scored welter of post-Virgilian, post-Augustan, expropriative echoes and typological fulfillments, one particular motif stands proudest: the *iuuenis* ("youth") who once half-blessed Virgil's civil-war-torn pastoral world (VE1.42) and then was invoked to rescue the capsized planet (VG1.500) now leads in the re-make event of golden-age happiness transfigured (not into the "boy baby," *puer*, announced in VE4, but) into the *iuuenis* identified as "victor in court for his mother's Iulii" and/or (it amounts to the same thing) "for the "Iulus-es" (CS1.45): *maternis causam qui uicit Iulis* (cf. esp. Julius' first words in Suetonius, *Divus Iulius* 6.1, on burying aunt Julia: "*maternum genus ab regibus ortum, paternum cum diis immortalibus coniunctum; . . . a Venere Iulii, cuius gentis familia est nostra*," "My mother's family sprang from royalty, my father's linked to deathless gods; the Iulii from Venus are the family my own house belong to").

This recoups the grandest matrix for Faunus' prophecy in the Almighty's reading from the book of Fate to Aeneas' mother Venus, which launches the great epic of Roman empire as redress for Trojan extirpation; here her anxieties were allayed by the pledge of the Caesar savior to come, destined one day to imprison the Frenzy of civil war: *nascetur pulchra Troianus origine Caesar . . . Iulius a magno demissum nomen Iulo . . .* "Caesar will be born, lovely Troy-originated, a Iulius, the pedigree bequeathed to the future from Iulus the Great" (VA1.286–96: the original's "cognomen" *Iulus* a modernization for the *Ilus* he carried while "Ilium" – Troy – stood, 267–8). Down the line the reign of Faunus' youth will extend the family's victory in court to imperial victory over the War goddess Bellona, and turn her rabid fangs on her own guts, to wage war on herself, after the "*recent* civil wars she spread the world over" (CS1.49–50, *modo quae toto ciuilia distulit orbe . . . bella*): then there will be no more repeats of Julius' civil war or Roman triumphs for the capture of Rome, "for *all* wars will be jailed in Hell" (52). All this is negated in Lucan's staging of Rome "turning victorious hand against, into, her guts," "fighting wars no triumphs will end," in Julius' own *Bellum Civile*, where the hero's first transgressive step will appeal for blessing to "the Trojan nation's and Julian clan's

homestead gods' (BC.1.3, 12, 196–7), and much later promise there will be a Roman Troy rebuild, redoubling Lucan's assurance that the two of them will live to eternity (9.998–9, 983–6). It is Lucan, too, who takes most trouble to peg the appearance of Caesar's baleful "comet" flat to "régime change/change of ruler on planet Earth," in his case the sign for civil war to commence and end the Republic (1.529, *terris mutantem regna cometen*).

The connection between court case and comet is the tale recounted by CS1, which began with Corydon and his brother seeking shelter in Faunus' cave from a "not yet cooling late summer" (1.1–18). Therein they find a poem fresh-cut into a beech and "not yet" set dry, the work of no herdsman or traveler, but holy scripture (23, 28–30). Such is the unauthored book of Fate that authorizes the arrival of the golden age, "icumen in," a pastoral reframing of "father Faunus"' oracle that once warned "from deep in his grove" that a foreigner shall come to marry into leadership of Latium and their descendants shall achieve worldwide rule, in the epic saga that opened with Virgil's pledge of "horrendous wars" up ahead, the destruction of Italy by the Trojan invader (VA7.102, 95–101, 41–3). The tree refashions the message into prediction of its *iuuenis*' restoration of Saturnian peace timed by the comet it records as on its twentieth day now lighting up the sky (i.e. at time of writing, not of reading): this, the prophecy serves notice, is anything but the Virgilian sort that upon (Julius) Caesar's extinction/ascension declared fatal/fateful civil war(s) (1.77–83). We know that Nero the son of Agrippina, fresh adopted by the emperor Claudius to consolidate a Julio-Claudian claim to legitimate succession from Augustus, "son" of Julius, had, at 16, as part of his coming out, taken up the court case of the people of Troy, and won the town release from all liability to tribute by trotting out all the old jive, eloquent as you like – "Rome's Trojan pedigree, Aeneas the founder of the Julian stock, etc. etc., on into ancient mythology" (Tacitus, *Annals* 12.58, *Romanum Troia demissum et Iuliae stirpis auctorem Aeneam aliaque haud procul fabulis uetera*, cf. Suetonius, *Nero* 7.2, "in Greek"). That was the debutant's maiden speech in AD 53, a year or two into accelerated adult civic life.

Claudius' death next fall, officially dated at October 13, 54 (but the timing adjusted to suit, by the king-making "Tanaquil" Agrippina, Tacitus, *Annals* 13.58–9), had been presaged by the appearance of Halley's Comet earlier that summer, visible between my birthday, June 9, and July 9 (Suetonius, *Claudius* 45, 46; cf. Pliny, *Natural History* 2.92; Dio 60.35.1). The take of CS1, then, is that his rustics stumbled on the future a good three months before Claudius officially bubbled his last breath. It – he – had "not yet" transpired when they read Faunus' truly oracular *finis* with terms for successful transfer of power to his Julian "mother's boy": no thunder, and "Rome shall not rate the homestead gods duly emeritus until dawn looks back on/pays respects to dusk/birth on death" (1.87–8, *nec prius ex meritis defunctos Roma penates | censeat occasus nisi cum respexerit ortus*; to risk foreclosing on an excruciating oracular *crux*, cf. Küppers (1985)). Listening to the elaborate message had "long since" filled Corydon with the spirit; his brother knows this gift was put in their way to pass on, they must give it voice tuned to woodwind, their mission is to sing the song (= prophesy the prophecy): "perhaps Meliboeus will carry it to august ears" (1.89–93).

So CS1 sets its moment as anticipation of Nero's succession to Claudius' defunct household ceremonially dignified by his ceremonial deification of his adoptive father, so

conjuring respectful continuity between discard and restoration (see Esposito (2009)). It is an anticipation of the moment of Claudius' ''apocolocyntosis'' satirically dismantled by Seneca's skit – the moment when Claudius died, was publicly pronounced dead, given a funeral and cremated, declared risen in the Senate but entry denied in Olympian debate/court, descended to hell and by the court there condemned to play on, Claudius forever. *This* version of apotheosis-with-a-difference, the difference that it calls itself meaningless, makes complex play with the various styles of representation available to unpack the handover, playing off poetic cliché against historian factoid: saccharine verse formulae for ''rise and fall'' may come two-a-penny, but their expressive/symbolic treatment of temporality tells how to regard an episode, just the way that CS1 plays its ''not yet's'' through ''long since's'' (Leach (1973) 56–7). Whenever Claudius' ticker may have stopped, it wasn't a day too soon, for a young man in a hurry (compare vv. 1–3 with the parody *and gloss* in *Apocolocyntosis* 2). The skit on mimesis at court never moves past its chosen instant, breaking into consecration/coronation mode with a song from the Fates which splices the cutting short of Claudius' thread/reign with compensatory productivity of spin for the new golden age as its way of finessing the foretelling of the baby who will be born to be king of VE4 (46–7), and cutting straight to the chase. For, as in EE1's envisioning of ''Apolline Caesar,'' when skittish Seneca trashes flash poetastry in hype mode, the epiphany he comes up with acclaims the *Wunderkind* as another Apollo. The only difference is that he has Apollo arrive to bless the new star or rising sun, ''his twin in looks and grace, in song and speech his match,'' as exactly ''Caesar, the dazzling Apolline beauty Rome will gaze upon *from this moment forth – NERO!*'' (*Apocolocyntosis* 4, esp. vv. 15, 30, *Phoebus adest . . .*, *talis Caesar adest, talem iam Roma Neronem aspiciet* ~ EE1.15, 37).

When next we meet Corydon in CS4, Meliboeus finds him concentrating hard (''silent''), in the company of his younger brother Amyntas, busy working on songs beyond bucolic, up to the same level as Faunus' prophecy (shh! literary silence abhors a vacuum: e.g. Vozza (1994) fills it with somber brooding on flattery as the price of artistic, or other, survival in Nero's/the Caesars' Rome; decibels as thematic core in CS: Chinnici (2009)). Songs fit to sing in the golden age, along with the god who reigns o'er Rome in peace (1–8). This *iuuenis* has Apollo's blessing, he is assured, and hopes it lifts him to Virgilian heights – the meta-, or past-, pastorality of VE4 (9, 70–2; 73–7). *This* Meliboeus gets to play (quasi-)amoebaean ''judge,'' but (way beyond the melding of EE1's songs) this cooperative pair don't compete with each other, they strive for that level of exaltation, and create a winning impression together through antiphonal response (Gibson (2004)). Venturing way, way beyond anything they can pull off, and only these blithe folksingers might dare, a mighty hymnbook of paradise fills out fit to burst the genre, at 169 lines way beyond the Virgilian mean of 84 set by VE1 and otherwise adhered to by CS (average 98 vv.).

The duo end with prayers that this heaven-sent *iuuenis* be allowed those very celestial gold threads wished him by Seneca's ''!*Apollocyntosis*!,'' to the life (CS4.137, 139–41 ~ *Apoc.* 4 vv. 8–11). The first wish, for divinity and sojourn on earth, is finally upped by bringing in Horace's first ode proper for paraded trouncing (*Odes* 1.2.41–52; hammed up in Lucan's Nero proem, BC1.45–7): spurred on, the (br)other is inspired to have Caesar *already* a god, not Mercury in the guise of *iuuenis*, but Jupiter or another Olympian (guess!), who must at all costs resist the attraction of heaven: ''Our Father, do

not abandon the project of Peace you have *begun*'' (142–6, *coeptamque, pater, ne desere pacem*). The lads' joint effort gets Meliboeus' say-so (''Eat your heart out, Ovid,'' he intimates at 151), and Corydon in so many words requests the poetry be forwarded to those ''august ears'' – ''to the god'' – since they can't, but *he* can, get it in to ''Apollo'' on the Palatine (158–9). Here at the centre-point of this project, the new reign is in full flow, but still, so far as the lads are concerned, *only just* ''begun.''

For now, they are told to cool it, it's early in the day/early days, and there's work to be done, this poem's already outstaying its . . . (168–9, note the characteristically expressive poetic time-setting formulae).

So this stage outlines a story component to CS' work. These ''likely lads'' (4.165, *meritae . . . iuuentae*) have had their walk-on bucolic horizons lifted by being cast unawares in a remake of the myth of Good King Numa, who learned the ''work of Peace'' (CS1.65–8) in the sacred grove where the Muses dwelled. Here is where Ovid began his book of Rome, at the interregnal moment of Rome's first succession, rid of slaughterous Romulus (*Metamorphoses* 15.1, quoted at CS1.85). Centuries later, hands rediscovered the books in the fields, and brought them to Rome. Now *our* herdsmen were first drawn through reading the message in the bark (*liber* in Latin) to learn to sing its song, then to learn how to rise to its level until they can try to *really* sing it, sing what the song means, listen until they can tune in to the power of the song, and project, through performance, into the performative project. Divine prophecy *makes* it all come true; devoted singing aspires to be more than aspirational, to procure and secure wishes, by affect, through incantation. So, start out from received text, transmit the legacy, then contribute – and find readers.

Corydon goes on to close the collection by bringing back home the story of his solo attempt in Rome to get as close himself to the radiant figure there of (what he sees himself as having seen, and now images and verbalizes, as) ''Apollo-crossed-with-Mars'' as Meliboeus was claimed to move, as possible go-between and entrée (both another Tityrus, then, and anything but, cf. 76.1 ~ VE1.1, Newlands ((1987) 219). Day 20, and Corydon's back from town, from seeing the sights, show and showman both, in the dazzling arena of Rome's ''youth/god'' (*iuuenis deus*, 7.6). In Lycotas, the stripling finds an audience all ears back in the valley. Recounts in over 50 lines how he saw the mind-boggling spectacle, including the spectators, of marvels scarcely comprehensible to habitués, he was told by a long-in-the-tooth metropolitan spectator (who is, however, here to mark the impossibility that what he is watching could coincide with the visitor's experience). Takes a shot at encompassing the sophisticated wonder stadium in herdsman's farmyard vocabulary, then its zoo-time parade of exotica verbalized by reference to familiar herding stocks (cf. Leach (1973) 80–2, Williams (1994)). Never reflects that he is once more being conscripted for a new riff on an age-old myth of charismatic power. He is, unawares, one more beast of the earth drawn along with the rest, from all quarters to the centre, by the magnetic aura of his god's presence. But ruefully reports the closest he and the rest of the drab human herd came to face-to-face contact with deity was far enough away to be frustrated at the outer limit of eyesight (among the pygmy plebs staring up at the royal box). He winds up deracinated, reclaimed for pastoral but unreconciled, wishing for a passport out of (t)here (see Newlands (1987); Garthwaite and Martin (2009) esp. 319). We have *used* him to take the measure of social hierarchy structured through the social gaze: whether

differentially, because from one (individual? alien?) in a crowd or monologically, because Caesars consume difference – (as *Big Brother* would insist) *you decide*.

Now CS wrote Corydon and co., he didn't have to *be* him or them. But it bears observing when Corydon gets his older, *taller*, brother to read Faunus' marvelous proclamation, close up, from the top (1.24–7), this *both* acknowledges the surreal dimensions of this jumbo poster that lines up 56 uncanny hexameters on one tree-trunk and indicates the high-style pretensions of its dummy *Aeneid* equivalence, *and* evokes a childhood friend of the poet Persius, one *Calpurnius* "Statura," presumably toting a heightist nickname. Of him all we know is that he ran with the other budding poets, including Lucan, within the Seneca pack, but died, at some point before AD 62, while yet a *iuuenis* (Suetonius, *Life of Persius*; cf. Leach (1973) 88. Wiseman (1982) unearths many a Calpurnian connection lurking in the words/woods – not least *Numa*). But this surreal bit of by-play at last ties in the *Laus Pisonis*, traditionally bundled together with CS and EE (sandwiched in the Duffs' Loeb (1934) 289–315), and presenting a heave of fetching naiveté, or winsome charm, in addressing *Calpurnius* Piso as its mogul.

First with soft soap, yet all the while steadily working towards the point by running through this poet-musician-singer addressee's artistic bent – his lyre labeled "Apolline," so "his teacher must have been Apollo" (167–8) – but turning eventually to these very sample pages in production, this louse presses straight-up, in so many words, for patronage (214–61): Rome's answer to Homer, Virgil, would have stayed a nullity hidden in the *Eclogues*' shade but for his Maecenas – and so too would Varius and Horace. So, lift this pride of youth from obscurity – "not yet in his twentieth summer" (261). The mock-gauche *Laus* makes explicit the axiom that underpins every post-Virgilian moment in EE or CS: the Mantuan Theocritus became the Roman Homer; his progression from bucolic through didactic to foundation epic always already stamps every line of VE, and all bucolic in his shadow, as the start of an ascent. An ascent tied to the emergence of Octavian-Augustus Caesar from boy to youthful cosmocrat, and enabled by recognition of the promise in VE followed by support and promotion as the new court came into power from his literary associate Maecenas.

In CS4, Corydon lets himself crudify the dynamics of artistic clienthood put on the record for the early Augustan fraternity by *Horace*'s personally inflected poetic (failing any steer from reticent Virgil). Horace's career was kick-started from worse than nowhere by an introduction to Maecenas by Virgil, followed by lowbrow *sermones* and rough *epodes* under his aegis, in preparation for the launch of the new autocracy with sublime lyric and reflective epistles, and its final apotheosis with the choral ode to sing in the New Age plus the laureate lesson on the poet's craft: enabled throughout by the patron lifting protégé from mundane jobbing by endowment with the fêted Sabine Farm, and in the process writing, and processing, his life, as his theme.

CS's Corydon buttonholes his would-be patron already in *his Eclogues*, putting the equation to him: he had in the past despaired of the brothers ever keeping hunger from the door through musicianship, but that was then, but now "times have changed, and so has god" (4.30). He's just been handed the pipe of Virgil's Tityrus (i.e. the works, from VE1.1 through VG4.566), and the inspiration to try and pull off another VE4 (58–63, 74–7), bolstered by ideas from that centerpiece VE5 (Gibson (2004) 4–5). All he needs now, to stay out of the grind, is a (Sabine) *farm of one's own* (152–6; cf. Leach (1973) 76–7, with Leach (1993)). Meliboeus shall play the one who fetched Tityrus to

town, showed him the gods, and turned him on to the Virgil trip: ''1. Discard Bucolic, for 2. Agrobusiness, then (the ultimate) 3. Saga of War'' (162–3).

Within the pastoral project, there is no escape from pastoral; but aspiration to transcend pastoral is *characteristic* of pastoral: on the model of VE4, CS mimes the human comedy of a new wave of novices throbbing at the once-in-a-blue-moon opportunity to make it big in the verse business presented by the arrival of an Apollo of an emperor, equally fresh-faced and into poetry and the Arts, and exactly fitting the bill of a return to the promised epiphany of the Roman Prince of Peace whose visualization had provided the Augustan poets with their careers, as that no-brainer winning theme of representing Almighty Caesar provided them with their start, their development, and apogee. What was, or could have been, lived as organic growth had been nevertheless destiny all along, as the song they were ordained to sing tuned them into their vocation as celebrants of the(ir) New Order.

Almost 20 already, like Persius and Piso's pal, as eager for an audition as Corydon and his brothers, as Nero approached his eighteenth birthday, these boys hustled for their break into the big time with ambitions to match. Get that first shot of folksy pastoral right, and the next Elvis is in the making. Persius and at least one Calpurnius had their planes crash, and, for whatever reasons, the *Laus* never made a splash and EE made no name, but like CS already shot their bolt, anticipating, even obviating, their *Aeneid*s. Much, in the case of CS, as Persius' neat little book of seven poems already incorporates, decocted, the Horatian journey in hexameters from satire through epistles.

At 15, Lucan was too young to join in the moment of accession propaganda that induced ''Numa'' to present summer AD 54 as salvation from ''recent'' civil war (CS1.49–50; see Wiseman (1982), arguing, in the course of a valorization of the oracle's Claudian indictment and program for Neronian rectification, that major uprising in AD 42, reprisals, and lengthening lists of eliminations fits the bill); and it is beyond our reach to construct his writing trajectory between the début in 60 with *Laudes Neronis* and the prequel-cum-sequel ~~Aeneid~~ that finished writer and poem off, where that ''Iulus'' Julius Caesar's demolition disrupts Virgil's twinning of Aeneas with Augustus as builders. But this ultimate product of the ''NOT YET/SINCE AGES AGO'' (*nondum/iam dudum*) hothouse of Nero's Rome (Gowers (1994)) memorably (anecdotally) gets to show how for Lucan's generation long lifetimes concertinaed into no time at all, when he plays off the ''Virgilian'' mould by bragging that he still had ages to go before he was the age of (pseudo-)Virgil when he came up with his preliminary approach to Octavius (i.e. pre Octavian Caesar, pre-Augustus), that spoof-*Aeneid* in bucolic drag, the *Culex* (whose minibug hero stings a herdsman to save him from snakebite and gets smacked flat for his pains; see Suetonius, *Life of Lucan*; Statius, *Silvae* 2.7.73–4). Yet through the poetic career of Lucan's commemorator Statius, the Virgilian paradigm of raising the game from the woods to the wars continued on past the accelerated burn-out of the Neronians, comet-style, in their bloodbath finale ushering in multiple more-than-civil wars and non-Julian restoration through change of dynasty. No Roman coronation on record would ever hit such heights again; but just as VA inheres in VE, the endgame debacle was indelibly stamped on the blithe outpourings of AD 54: zenith to nadir between 16 and 30, ''Nero''!

Meantime, CS' presentation of his work-in-progress demo album as credentials for a long-term contract serves up a self-contained take on the poetic scene as seen through

pastoral eyes. The lads are "busy in their bedrooms" learning from the greats, hoping they can find a cover then break their compositions, find a mogul, and play. Sandwiched between Corydon's evolving story in 1, 4, 7 are two paired sets of pairs that pattern the seven tracks into a concentric spin round the hub (like zones, like lyre-strings, Apollo-style: cf. EE1.29–31; see esp. Leach (1975), Davis (1987)). Give it a spin:

CS2 and 6 ring the changes on that staple, the amoebaean duel. CS2 follows VE7 in framing the contest as already the recreation by a single voice of an improvised exchange which now enters the recorded repertoire, for passing on down along the line. But here shepherd is matched with *gardener*, and the new-fangled cutting contest plays through from first to last as cooperative antiphonal duet, duly blessed as such with the judge's final verdict of a glorious draw between comrades for life (Leach (1975) 209–12). No call for our narrator to add a word, where(as) Meliboeus the soloist re-performing the joust of VE7 proclaimed this the moment that first made Corydon Corydon for us (for ever) – and so put us on the spot (to agree or submit).

CS6 on the other hand is entirely dramatic interaction: Lycidas is greeted with "You're too late" from Astylus, who has just judged a proper showdown (maybe improperly, see Gibson (2004) 8–13). His provocation sparks hot altercation that works up through the preliminaries of fixing (weirdly over-fancified) stakes, appointing judge, shifting to ideal studio space, gearing up for the off: but the twofold "mad repartee" this time goes way past the few hot seconds before the runners and riders of EE1 come under starter's orders (89–90, *furitis*... *insania* ~ v. 13). The judge voids the contest and calls in "heavies here to put an end to the brawl" (where VE3's judge declared "no contest as beyond his ability to call," both sports deserving the win for "such a complete show," 108, *non nostrum inter uos tantas componere lites* ~ v. 93, *litibus hi uestris poterunt imponere finem*). So truly we latecomers missed the (Virgil?) show because our players aborted their performance, and – took an early bath! (Simon (2007) rescues the fun artistry lavished on this stirring storm in a teacup; cf. Vinchesi (2008)).

For running-mates, CS3 offers a "live" sketch capturing a chance encounter between two herdsmen (reformé from VE7.6–17) which includes Lycidas' dictation of a 56-lines-long love-tortured serenade poem "To Phyllis" for inscription on a cherry tree, ready for instant removal of the bark and express delivery by Iollas; whereas CS5 has a framing narrator set the scene and bring on a maestro herdsman's monologue to teach his apprentice the full year-round schedule of herding tasks for him to impersonate, without interruption, clear through to the end... of the day (vv. 120–1). In VE2 the voice-over had set up a monologue without closing the frame which rehearsed a practice serenade for the boy out of reach and earshot in town, and VE8 had the poet step out as narrator bringing on Damon's tortured "Blues For Nysa's wedding" to be answered by Alphesiboeus' wizard "I Put a Spell on Daphnis" voodoo, hexing him here from town. Now CS3 borrows the latter song's successful ploy of likening the (in fact bruised and battered) "beloved" to a heifer lost to the wild, but everything works out this time, as Iollas' quest for his missing heifer is immediately solved on the spot thanks to Lycidas' tip-off, and this success is a good omen that the elegiac mail will bring Phyllis round – once Iollas reads it out to her with a winning lyrical performance. (Multiply "Ovidian" burlesque: Vinchesi (1991)).

So an unVirgilian upbeat glow washes through CS2–3 as the set takes shape, reaching out to common ground with love elegy in preparation for the effort to impress the

big company in 4, then already bidding to step into Virgil's shoes with what could be done with didactic epic, *after* Virgil's cattle-tending showcase (VG3.286–456: Marchiò (1957)). By way of foretaste of the prospective laureate's next crafted tilt at greatness and grandeur, as foretold in the programmatic CS4, an emphatically transmogrified version of pastoral precociously passes on the old ways till the sheep and goats come home – "and there's much more where that came from" (v. 119). Whereupon, too late/too soon, mistimed dissension breaks up the idyll, to usher in the protagonist's final reluctant return in crestfallen disappointment of ever scaling the heights. "In the Pines" through "Talkin' New York," yes, it's a storyline.

In fine, I am backing ultra-strict literalist construal of EE and now CS as products of the first days of emperor Nero in autumn AD 54, with CS1 reading back *ex eventu* to a prophecy date-lined as late June, and Corydon's three weeks off to the metropolis and back included in the fall festivities. (I see – hear – no call to look further into the reign except for more of the *kind*: shows that defeat minds and vocabularies.) Since Haupt (1854 = 1875) detached CS's heptad from a third-century CE dateline (accepted since rediscovery in the 1360s; for the paradosis: Reeve (1978)), mainstream criticism was until recent dispute in English scholarship content to hunt for clues for a more specific chronicle for poetic production under Nero (momentously summarized in Momigliano (*1944*)). Sundry objections to the status of genuine Neronian accession propaganda feature claims for intertextual relationships between the bucolica and later Latin texts starting with Lucan (and his later, putatively posthumously available (post-Nero? post-civil-war?) books of BC), then on through Statius and beyond. The non-English classical world has not been convinced.

That the founding trope of pastoral is a highly pronounced prosopopoeia distancing utterance from author and reader by postulation of an imagined marginal *locus loquendi*, where the global archive of imperial culture means precious little, means that what gets said easily assimilates to *any* place/time of reading-performance. Partially, since it's a provocative proposition that changing places between city and village generates wholesale cultural schism that checks out any reader-participant's pretensions to empathy with the other. Decisively, in that the further away we get from ourselves, the closer our reading comes. "Nero" – that *iuuenis* – as "any establishment" can stand for whatever "ironies" envelop emerging artistic talent on exposure to ambition, funding, recruitment, career .... Certainly (I move) CS' project conducts a charming/poisonous suite that scripts the conundrum that sell-out starts where success begins.

FURTHER READING

EE appear conveniently, with English translation, in Duff and Duff (1934) 319–35, with German translation, in Korzeniewski (1971) 76–85 (with useful *loci similes* and, at 110–16, notes); Italian ed.: Giarratano (1943), French Amat (1997) (with French trans.). Cf. also Pearce (1992) (with comm., English trans., and vocab.).

Korzeniewski (1966) and Merfeld (1999) treat the hot potato of extremism in tropes of panegyric, Amat (1998) targets elements of humour; Karakasis (2010) accommodation of other genres in the mix. Cf. also Effe and Binder (2001).

Hubbard (1996) 141–50 outlines a subtle reading, in the re-doubled shadows of Virgil and Lucan.

''What is pastoral?'': see Alpers (1996). For the dynamics of ''amoebaean'' bucolic song-contest, see Henderson (1999) chapter 6 (reprinted in Volk (2008) essay 7) on Virgil, *Eclogue* 3. For pastoral (on) cultural values, see Saunders (2008), van Sickle (2011).

CS appears conveniently, with English translation, in Duff and Duff (1934) 209–85 and, with German translation, in Korzeniewski (1971) 1–73 (with useful *loci similes* and, at 85–110, notes); text with French trans.: Amat (1991), with Italian trans.: Vinchesi (1996). For commentary, Keene (1887 = 1998) has been a century's stand-by in English (cf. Pearce (1990), with commentary, English translation, and vocabulary); in German: Fey-Wickert (2002) on 2, 3, Schröder (1991) on 4; in Italian, Di Salvo (1990) on 7.

The case for discrediting a Neronian date is put most engagingly by Horsfall (1997); on the other side, Wiseman (1982) does a great job of blackening Claudius' reign in retrospect, and Ruggeri (2002) presses for the traditional ''coronation'' date for CS1.

Garthwaite and Martin (2009) unfold tight design debouching inexorably in pessimism, in the wake of the fine reading of Davis (1987). Hubbard ((1996) 150–78) and (on CS1) Slater (1994) explore dialogical traces born of anxiety of Virgilian influence and Langhoff (1990) unpacks piled levels of Virgilian intertextuality: the metapoetic, metageneric, morphing involved is teased out by Magnelli (2004) and (2006); cross-genre hybridizing by Karakasis (2010).

An equable, now yellowing, survey: Verdière (1985); but for the Anglo-glott world, neglect of a slumbering CS was broken by two inspiriting *Ramus* articles, Leach (1973) and (1975), on 1, 4, 7 (cf. Vozza (1993) on the whole book plus *Zeitgeist*, diagnosing withering scorn asymptotic stand-off between pastoral visions and values and the ''futilities'' of broken cosmocracy. ''Ironic'' subversion of encomium by self-satirizing excess or hands off formal encomium? (Red corner: Martin (2003) vs blue: Friedrich (1976)). Polarized positions have colluded to choke off responsive engagement with this compelling poetry (see Römer (1994) esp. 98–100).

Newlands (1987) on CS7 has done most yet to co-implicate two-way traffic between the outlook from the countryside scorned by its most venturesome tiro and the view from the citified court, so pinpointing interplay as the buzz engendered by, and as, reading. Through the warping of Corydon (and co.), critique of pastoral poetry tangles with criticism of patronage palaver.

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CHAPTER 11

Seneca's Philosophical Writings: *Naturales Quaestiones, Dialogi, Epistulae Morales*

Jonathan Mannering

Introduction: The Writings of Seneca the Younger

If we are to know the sort of writer and thinker Seneca makes himself, it may be illuminating to consider what Seneca is not. To this end, and by way of beginning, I propose introducing the rhetorical theorist Quintilian as figurative foil to Seneca, a comparison I hope not entirely arbitrary nor artificially synchronic. Although the two men were near contemporaries (exact dates of their births are unknown, but Quintilian was likely 40 years younger), shared Spanish origins (Quintilian from the north in modern Calahorra, Seneca from the south in Córdoba), and may have even crossed paths at Rome in the middle of the first century AD (Quintilian saw Seneca orate), their respective literary outputs are as different formally as their interests are intellectually. At the center of this difference is the particular human subject under enquiry and evaluation. Where Quintilian tried to conceive of the ideally consummate orator, "a good man skilled in speaking" (*vir bonus dicendi peritus*, *Institutio Oratoria* 12.1.1), to embody his principles of rhetoric (of all historical exemplars Cicero came closest), Seneca had applied much of *his* literary energy to answering questions of morality and ethics under the guiding light of Stoic philosophy, and to measuring the quality and conduct of his own life, as well as the lives of others, *against that* of the perfectly wise man, or *sapiens* (none could ever exist in reality, though the elder Cato is frequently valorized). Seneca avers that he himself is as much a student, dubbed alternately *proficiens* and *progrediens*, forever on the unfinishable ascent towards consummate wisdom, as his addressees and interlocutors.

Not only is each writer engaged in defining different ideal human subjects, but Seneca's written corpus would take on shape radically different from Quintilian's. Quintilian completed his 12-book *magnum opus* under the emperor Domitian (81–96 AD)

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and near the (natural) end of his own life; the output of Seneca, before his suicide (at the order of Nero), was both prolific and wide-ranging. In addition to his scientific investigations, tragedies, and the satirical *Apocolocyntosis* (see Doody, Buckley, and Whitton respectively in this volume), Seneca investigated philosophical topics in the form of epistles (124 grouped in 20 books) and lengthier dissertations, or "dialogues" (12 topics spread across 21 books). Published speeches, a biography of his father, and a host of other ethnographic and philosophical works are attested but not extant; for a time the *Declamationes*, the work of his father, were thought to be his, and many apocryphal works, including an epistolary correspondence with the Apostle Paul, have also been attributed to the poet-philosopher-statesman. The numerous works mistakenly, or wishfully, ascribed to Seneca testify to his enduring appeal, and his writings would influence Christian theology for centuries, as well as the moral philosophy and poetry of the Renaissance and beyond (see Braund in this volume).

Nor, for that matter, is the formal and formidable systematization that controls Quintilian's work as a unified whole to be seen in the discursive structure and style of Seneca's philosophical writings, written to affect a private and conversational fiction with their readership. Seneca's prose, roiling and epigrammatic, favors the vitality, intensity, and immediate impact of pointed, at times eye-popping rhetorical devices: antithesis, paradox, graphic metaphor, and the *sententia* (a terse phrase with a moralizing or, more generally, striking thought at the conclusion of a section). Directly influenced by the sensational practices of the schools of declamation, a form of improvisational oratory which became popular in the early empire, Seneca's prose is distinctively un- (if not forthrightly anti-) Ciceronian, and consciously dispenses with Cicero's flowing, periodic sentence structure, which constituted for many inheritors of Latin prose the highest achievement of Republican oratory.

Of his style as well as his thought Seneca found both admirers and critics. Quintilian, after extolling the virtues of Cicero's style, laments the fact that so many of the youth of his day imitate only Seneca's excesses. He does concede that Seneca is not without merit, but warns that it takes a discerning eye to find the more agreeable expressions of noble sentiment in weighty themes which have been fragmented by too many epigrams (*Institutio Oratoria* 10.1.125–31). Aulus Gellius takes Seneca to task for his criticisms of Cicero and of the archaic style which had been modeled on the poetry of Ennius (*Attic Nights* 12.2). Neither of these authors, though, is as dismissive of Seneca's speaking style as the emperor Caligula had been (Suetonius, *Caligula* 53.2). Among his self-professed admirers may be counted Pliny the Elder, as well as the poets Martial, Statius, and Juvenal.

Seneca's unique mode of writing also poses challenges for historical enquiry. For all the urgency of their exhortational tone, his works are generally divested of the particulars of current and recent social and political events, so that precise dates of many of his works cannot be determined by internal evidence. Efforts to reconcile the chronology of his output with the events of his life must therefore be left to best estimates. Uncertainty over the periods of his activity need not be exaggerated, as we can surmise that his extant works were written in the last 25 years of his life, while some of his most voluminous output took place in the last few years of his retirement. But, ultimately, Seneca's is a corpus which may be subject to loose reconfiguration by any given reader. His interests in a wide range of genres, coupled with the noticeable lack of references to politics of the

day, make it nearly impossible to construct a chronologically coherent "Seneca" from his literary corpus.

Further implications are thus posed. One profound result of Seneca's style is that his biography must be sketched mainly from external sources. The self-effacement of the author is hardly unique to Seneca (what can be known of Plato from his writings?), but the portrait painted by historical sources (primarily Tacitus: cf. *Annals* 12.8, 13.2–15.64), and also Suetonius (*Nero* 7, 35.5, 52) and Cassius Dio (60.32–62.25) is often at disconcerting odds with the Stoic moralist which Seneca constructs for, and as, himself. Born circa 4 BC into an affluent equestrian family, Seneca was the second of three sons to a father of the same name, Lucius Annaeus Seneca, rhetorician and historiographer. Little of his early career at Rome is known, but he did make a reputation as an orator and was elected to a quaestorship. Having escaped the enmity of Caligula, in 41 he was exiled to the island of Corsica by Claudius on a charge of adultery. His fortunes changed again in 49 when he was returned to Rome with the help of Agrippina to be made praetor as well as tutor to her 12-year-old son Nero. Initially Seneca exerted a positive influence over the young emperor as *amicus principis*, but his authority was gradually eroded by Nero's own moral dissolution. By the time of his retirement and forced suicide, Seneca had amassed a personal fortune in the millions after his years of close yet only quasi-official involvement in politics. Although Seneca himself frequently admits to falling far short of the ideal *sapiens*, his affluence, far-reaching political accomplishments, and penchant for extramarital affairs fracture the philosopher's *persona* irreconcilably: the Senecan moral "message" is riven with hypocrisy (see the indispensable Griffin (1976)).

However, even if we possessed a secure chronology for Seneca's work, the complete "Seneca" would not necessarily become a consistent individual – nor, for that matter, could his writings ever resolve as a Latin technical handbook on Stoic doctrine. It was never Seneca's purpose to re-compose the works of Zeno, Cleanthes, Chrysippus, et al. into a reference book on Stoic orthodoxy for a Roman audience (see Bryan in this volume). For Seneca's aim is to transfer to a Roman context *ethical principles for living well*, and to engage successfully in the unending and grueling project of self-analysis and ethical self-improvement. Theory, jargon, and orthodoxy in themselves – and Seneca's erudite parodies of syllogistic argumentation indicate that he *could* practice philosophy conventionally – are not up to the task of preparing one for the practical enactment of virtue on a daily basis. If Quintilian reconceptualized practical oratory as theory, Seneca instead applies classical Stoic precepts to lived experience, sampled from history and the present day.

The overriding purpose of Seneca's writings is to deliver psychagogical protreptic towards mental tranquility by eradicating the fear of death. This is to be achieved by practicing several cardinal precepts, all of which are interconnected. (Since orthodoxy is put into the employ of the practical by Seneca, our own theorizations of what is "cardinal" in Senecan thought are always inherently provisional.) For one, we must harmonize ourselves with the order of the cosmos and the workings of nature, which are identified with divinity and providence. In addition, we are to manage, though not erase, our emotions with the power of reason. Also, and more paradoxically, we must inure our minds to the vicissitudes of fortune by constantly considering potential future misfortunes; this is achieved by assiduous self-analysis, and by learning to view all external

evils *and* goods, including health, wealth, family, and, above all, death, as "indifferent" to our mental well-being.

By virtue of its discomfiting paradoxes, its graphic, sensual, often violent imagery, the intuitional, metastatic structurations of its sermonic strategies, its superabundance of exhortational exempla, and its obsessive ruminations on mortality and dying, Seneca's rehabilitative philosophy could rightly be branded "shock therapy." Again and again Seneca shocks us into confronting powerful implications for conceptions of selfhood; personal freedom and will; vulnerability, pain, and care of the body; the role of emotions; the procedure for inuring oneself to the vicissitudes of fortune and acquiescing to fate; and the degree to which one, in pursuing tranquility, should participate in civic and social duties. With these interests in mind, I will present an overview of the *Naturales Quaestiones*, *Dialogi*, and *Epistulae Morales*.

One's Place In The Universe: *Naturales Quaestiones (Natural Questions)*

Logic, ethics, and physics, or natural science, comprised the three branches of ancient philosophy. Leading figures of Greek Stoicism, such as Zeno and Chrysippus, endorsed instruction in these elements, and applied themselves in all three fields (Diogenes Laertius 7.40). Seneca for his part polemicized against the study of logic at the expense of practical application (see further below on the *Letters*), but he did produce a collection of investigations into various natural phenomena (see Doody in this volume; also Hine (2006) on the scientific-literary tradition and the particularly Roman intellectual context of their composition; most recently Williams (2012)). Though likely composed late in his life (at least part of this work can be dated after an earthquake in Campania in 62), his *Naturales Quaestiones* (*NQ*) may serve as a useful introduction to the rest of his philosophy.

In the *NQ* Seneca requisitions a vast array of complementary and competing theories from different intellectual schools in order to assemble his own conclusions and best judgments on the workings of nature. Furthermore, in the prefaces and conclusions to each book Seneca frames the study of natural science as vital for consolatory and ethical purposes: it is by knowing the universe that we may know our place in it, and begin to free ourselves from the fear of death and the incapacitating behavioral vices which this fear induces. The universe itself is not chaotic but organized and determined according to reason (*ratio*), and this rational cosmos is to be construed as god itself, providential but impersonal. Throughout, Seneca exploits a powerful ambiguity between the language of theology and natural science to shape his understanding of man's relationship to god. Seneca also ponders the limits of our epistemic abilities, arguing that what is hidden from us in nature should be no barrier to our participation in the natural order, or to availing ourselves of the salutary life lessons that the study of nature provides. In method, also, Seneca regularly diverges from orthodox Stoic theory, explicitly and critically, in his efforts to look beyond the shortcomings of our knowledge towards the transcendent truths of the cosmos.

The literary approach which Seneca takes to science places hard demands on the reader. Typical for his style, Seneca conjures a cordial classroom ambience by personally addressing Lucilius, the dedicatee, interlocutor, and surrogate student (see further on

the *Letters* below), only to roll out swathes of scientific theories, to varying degrees of explicitation, selected from more than 40 primary sources. By turns Seneca indicates the rightness and wrongness of each theory as well as his own preferences, but also frames and interrupts his scientific enquiries with vibrant moralizing sermons. Nature, he argues, is to be studied for the purpose of moral improvement; ethics and morality should be predicated upon scientific facts in order to banish ignorance, and the fears and grotesque vices which attend a mind plagued by doubts.

Key to understanding the link between scientific knowledge and morality is Seneca's conception of god and his brand of epistemology (Inwood (2005b)). In Senecan theology, god is identified as both "the mind of the universe" (*mens universi*, *NQ* 1 pr. 13) and the material and phenomenological manifestations of this mind, "all that is seen and unseen." God is also identified as the organizing intelligence and rationale behind the workings of the universe, the *animus* and *ratio*, according to this formulation: "the mind is the better part of us, but in god there is no part other than mind: god is entirely reason" (*NQ* 1 pr. 14). Because nature, i.e. the physical manifestation of the mind of god, is fused with *ratio*, to study nature is to come to know the mind of god (*NQ* 1 pr. 16; 2.6.5). The terms *mens*, *animus*, and *ratio* have much in common, but it is by scientific enquiry, by viewing the infinite breadth and order of the cosmos (*NQ* 1 pr. 12), that we may begin to leave behind our preoccupations with mortality (*NQ* 1 pr. 17) and properly re-evaluate how we have (most often mis-) prioritized our daily lives.

The practical applications of scientific knowledge, however, are introduced abruptly by Seneca, challengingly so. Indeed, the moral implications for living in fear of natural phenomena can appear disconcertingly tenuous: ignorance of rainbows and other celestial occurrences leads to the abuse of mirrors, the root of man's worst self-deceptions, his corrosive desire for luxury goods, and even the dissolution of the individual and of society (*NQ* 1.16–17); the seas are plundered for exotic fish to serve at gaudy banquets (*NQ* 3.17–18); a study of the Nile prompts Seneca to warn Lucilius against flatterers (*NQ* 4a pr. 3–21); snow and ice are used to cool drinks and weaken one's constitution and moral fortitude (*NQ* 4b.13); the air itself is abused whenever winds propel ships to war (*NQ* 5.18.4–16).

Each leap from science to moralizing presses the reader into contextualizing bad behavior in the cosmic order. We may begin to bridge these abrupt shifts in topic with a fuller understanding of Seneca's epistemology, which states that what cannot be grasped by the senses can be understood by reason. The fact that causes cannot be given for certain natural phenomena (*NQ* 3.25.11) is the result of the limitations of our epistemic abilities, and not of randomness in the universe (*NQ* 2.35–6); we can use our faculty of *ratio* to extrapolate from natural patterns which can be observed empirically in order to theorize about what cannot be perceived by our senses. In other words, we should corroborate our *beliefs* about what occurs in the "unseen" regions of the world on the basis of what we *perceive* "up above" (*crede infra quidquid vides supra*, *NQ* 3.16.4). Seneca puts his own prescription to the test in a lengthy discussion of earthquakes, arguing that, in analogy to the human body, they are caused by disruptions to the movements of powerful air currents throughout enormous subterranean caverns (*NQ* 6.16). Of course this theory has long since been debunked, and Seneca forthrightly concedes the imperfection of his scientific knowledge (*NQ* 7.25.3–5): but it is the

credibility of the theory that matters most, since it is fashioned by a functioning *ratio*. Ignorance of the causes of natural disasters results in paralytic fear, and where causes cannot be known superficially we must rely not on our experience but on analysis of nature (*NQ* 6.3.2). Through his method of scientific analysis, Seneca demonstrates the potential of *ratio* to transcend the limitations of our physical senses, even though *ratio* is empirically and epistemically informed by them, and its potential too to dispel irrational fears brought about by ignorance.

The role of *ratio* in the *NQ*, moreover, poses critical implications for how we are to understand divinity, for Seneca coextends theological language with empirical science. The earliest natural scientists, not content with observing the exterior aspects of things, endeavored to fathom the very secrets of the gods (*NQ* 6.5.2). And although the supreme power of divinity (*numen summum*) eludes our eyesight, it can still be seen when we exercise our mental faculties (*NQ* 7.30.3–4). Therefore, by exercising his own inferential *ratio* in the study of natural science, Seneca demonstrates, on a very humble and imperfect scale, how the mind is not bound by corporeality and how it can participate in the order and harmony that is divinity: rational thought is the *animus* activated in accordance with divine nature. Accordingly, impiety may be defined in these terms as the squandering of one's naturally endowed ingenuity on vice and luxury and irrational fears. Since we have a share in god through our own portion of *animus*, and since the heavens are directly related to our minds (*NQ* 1 pr. 13), to violate our mind with fear, ignorance, and excessive behavior is to violate god: grotesque indulgence is a "crime" beyond the limits set by nature (*NQ* 1.16.8), and the abuse of nature is a corruption of the gifts from god (*NQ* 5.18.13).

Even if we did not know that the *NQ* were written in the culminating years of Seneca's career, and although the *NQ* did not garner scholarly attention to rival, for instance, Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*, in staking out the cosmic parameters of his theology and epistemology the *NQ* can be read as the broadest contextual frame to Senecan ethics. The divine cosmos may be unfathomable, but – and in ardent contrast to the Epicurean worldview – it is entirely rational and in no way subject to chance. Exercising one's intellect in scientific enquiry is to participate in divine reason, and yields intellectual reassurance (*confirmatio animorum*, *NQ* 6.32.1): from this vantage point we may begin to eradicate all irrational fears, including and above all the fear of death, since death is inevitable and part of nature itself (*NQ* 2.59.13, 6.1). Moreover, finding the cure for the fear of death is one of the main purposes of Seneca's exhortational philosophy across his written corpus, one which he approaches from myriad angles of intellectual perspective and even literary genre. The following sections will consider the correct ethical position of the individual in society, as well as the ontological nature of the self and its proper care and maintenance.

How To Be "Indifferent" Towards Politics, Friends, and Family: *Dialogi* (*Dialogues*)

Unlike Socrates, Seneca wrote his philosophy. And unlike Plato, Seneca wrote consistently *in propria persona*. What is more, the collection of Seneca's longer discourses on issues of morality classically referred to as *Dialogi* do not adhere to the formal demands

of Platonic dialogue in order to arrive at truth via dialectical procedure. Rather, these writings are essayistic, adopting features from several literary genres, primarily the epistle and its atmosphere of intimacy. Seneca's *vox propria* engages actively with his various addressees, their discursive exchanges constructing a lively fiction of spontaneity; any "dialogue" that does occur is controlled, for the most part, according to the conventions of forensic oratory, as Seneca makes intermittent answer to anticipated objections from his interlocutors.

Most of the 12 extant *Moral Essays* are one book in length, about the size of a slim novel; several multi-volume essays bring the total number of books to 21. Topics include: the happy life (*De Vita Beata* = *VB*) and tranquility of mind (*De Tranquilitate Animi* = *Tranq.*), the brevity of life (*De Brevitate Vitae*), providence (*De Providentia* = *Prov.*), gift-giving and proper reciprocity (*De Beneficiis*), leisured withdrawal from social and political affairs (*De Otio*), anger and revenge (*De Ira*), mercy (*De Clementia*), the self-possession of the truly wise person (*De Constantia Sapientis*), and consolation for loss of a loved one (in three separate *Consolationes*). Although the essays cover a wide range of moral and ethical issues, I will concentrate on what they say about the role of the philosopher in society, and how (or whether) the wise person should participate in various social spheres, from the political to the domestic. The process of reconciling the socially active self with philosophical values can be said to be one of "mediation," as the individual self negotiates social interactions on a case by case basis according to scrupulous ethical judgments on philosophical principle (Reydams-Schils (2005)). The aim of mediation is engaged and ethical sociability, as the wise person endeavors to integrate fully and virtuously with each social sphere.

In order to engage with society while maintaining ethical integrity, the wise person must first identify what is "indifferent" to mental tranquility. What Stoics referred to as *indifferentia* (*VB* 22.4) is a state of mind which regards all contingencies of fortune – poverty, sickness, pain, *as well as* their positive counterparts wealth and health – as fundamentally external to the well-being of the mind. Seneca delivers his own thesis on Stoic indifference at *De Providentia* 3.1, which radically re-evaluates widely held understandings of the nature of evil and why bad things seem to happen to good people. If a person is truly good by virtue of wisdom, Seneca argues, then evil cannot befall him (the gender is used advisedly), since the philosophical mind will regard all physical and mundane conditions as inconsequential to the primary concern of mental tranquility (*Prov.* 2.1). Such wise people "spurn external things" (*externa contemnunt*, *Prov.* 6.1).

External things are defined as gifts of fortune, which occupies the role of primary adversary in Seneca's cosmic-intellectual struggle. Although health and personal success are "preferred" indifferents – a philosopher may even possess great wealth (*VB* 21–23) – anything subject to the whims of fortune is inherently unstable (*De Brevitate Vitae* 17.4), and not conducive to mental fortitude since it can be taken away without a moment's notice (*VB* 15.3–4). Seneca casts the struggle for mastery over the blows of fortune as a gladiatorial spectacle worthy of divine spectatorship (*Prov.* 2.7–12).

It would be a mistake to interpret Stoic indifference as apathetic numbness, or even detached asceticism. The wise person is not insensate to adversity, but rather learns to overcome and endure (*Prov.* 2.2). Seneca thus endeavors to dispel the anxiety over the loss of good fortune and over the suffering of bad fortune. This struggle is figured

regularly in terms of mastery and servitude, and even good fortune in one's career can come to control the political aspirant (*VB* 26.1). Enslavement to frenzied ambition results in an enervating, unproductive restlessness (*inquieta inertia*, *Tranq.* 12.3), which itself results from career-driven engagements in political life and preoccupation with others' affairs.

Seneca does not advocate abstention from civic life in the first instance, but rather habilitates civic engagement with personal autonomy. Serenus, one of Seneca's interlocutor-addressees, reminds him and us that the founders of the Stoic school all engaged in public life, and urged others to do so (*Tranq.* 1.10), and that it is neither possible nor even desirable to give up socializing with people altogether (*Tranq.* 3.7). Seneca even composed a sturdy 7-book discussion of the ethical performance of social reciprocity (*De Beneficiis*; see further Inwood (2005c) 65–94, and Griffin (2003)). If necessary, though, the wise person may move to retire from a corrupt or excessively demanding society by stages: "It is of course incumbent upon one to be a benefit to his fellow man: where possible, to many; if that is too difficult, to a few; if that is not possible, to those closest to him; and if that is not possible, to himself" (*hoc nempe ab homine exigitur, ut prosit hominibus, si fieri potest, multis, si minus, paucis, si minus, proximis, si minus, sibi*, *De Otio* 3.5). The conceptualization of the retiring philosopher is configured along tight concentric gradients, as societal echelons are shed one by one to leave the singular self standing in virtuous autonomy. (On the construction of self-directed autocracy in Stoicism, see Roller (2001).)

Even in the privacy of retirement, the wise person is never entirely secluded from society, for he can become a role model by living reputation. Virtue can be cultivated in any position taken in society (*Tranq.* 4.6), and never remains hidden (*Tranq.* 3.6) since it is practically impossible to abstain entirely from one's community (*Tranq.* 4.8); the wise person benefits his community by his example and his pedagogy (*Tranq.* 3.3), while attracting the best sort of friends in his isolation (*Tranq.* 3.6). Seneca openly endorses the pleasures of friendship (*Tranq.* 7.3), and trust among close confidants, but ultimately it is the individual self that must be sought for debt-free reliance (*Tranq.* 8.9). With regard to the wider political state, Seneca supplies his own prickly nuance to the Stoic doctrine that the *sapiens* should not in fact attach himself to a political state (*De Otio* 8.1): when he offers Athens and Carthage as negative examples, we may infer that Rome is meant to complete an ascending tricolon of premier but flawed city states, the conventional tripartite sequence frustrated by the conspicuous absence of its third component. The consummate enactment of the political potentiality of solitary virtue – viz. acquiescent suicide – will be discussed further below. For now, we will consider what Seneca means when he describes how the individual self should properly relate to family as well as to personal emotions.

Seneca's letter to his mother (*Consolatio ad Helviam Matrem* = *Helv.*) is one of his earliest extant writings, datable to the first years of his exile. Within the genre of consolatory literature it is unusual, for the author is both the reason for the addressee's grief and also the one who offers comfort. The opening line to the letter captures the tension experienced in aligning one's daily efforts to idealized philosophical standards: "Many times now, best of mothers, have I caught the impulse to send you consolation, many times have I checked myself" (*saepe iam, mater optima, impetum cepi consolandi te, saepe continui*, *Helv.* 1.1). The iterative "*saepe iam*" denotes Seneca's repeated attempts

at finding appropriate words and sentiments to comfort his mother; these mundane efforts are juxtaposed with the extramundane, abstractly defined "*mater optima*," which sublimates his own mother Helvia to the superlative, always and everywhere ideal of motherhood – indeed, at no point after the dedication is Helvia mentioned by name. From here Seneca can model therapeutic behavior for Helvia by adducing and compositing exempla from across history and also across lines of gender. (On exile, gender, and the (political) portrayal of motherhood in this *consolatio*, see Williams (2006) 147–74 and McAuley (forthcoming).) This letter seeks to merge abstract Stoic principle with practical enactment to alleviate the concerns of a mother and those, self-avowed, of a son.

In deep connection with Seneca's literary exchanges with family and close friends, it is revealed that social bonds are also conditioned by the passions and emotional responses. At this point it is worth considering the ways in which Seneca offers guidance on how to manage inner passion. Crucially, inner passion cannot be eradicated (because emotional responses are derived from and, thus, sanctioned by nature), but rather subjected to guiding philosophical therapy. In his letter of consolation to Marcia, Seneca does not chastise his friend for grieving for her dead son, since he concurs that grief is sanctioned by the divine cosmos as a "naturally occurring want" (*naturale desiderium*, *Consolatio ad Marciam* 7.1 = *Marc.*) – as even animals mourn their lost offspring. Rather, it is the artificial manipulation of the passions beyond their naturally prescribed limits which distorts emotions into something contrary to nature (*Marc.* 7.3), and which Marcia must learn to control for her own benefit (Wilson (1997) 48–67). Furthermore, by virtue of the coextensivity between natural science and theological discourse, Seneca can claim that not to experience any emotions at all would not only be inhuman, but a form of impiety (*impietas*, *Consolatio ad Polybium* 17.2, 18.6 = *Pol.*). He recommends that one should avoid the harshness of apathy (*duritia, Pol.* 18.5), cultivating instead personal resilience (*fortitudo*) to mitigate the potential loss of control (*insania, Pol.* 18.6) that comes with emotional excess.

The psychology of the passions in Seneca's writings has been at the centre of scholarly attention in recent years (key works: Nussbaum (1994) esp. 402–38, and Graver (2007); on the passions in Senecan tragedy, see Buckley in this volume). It is the distortion of reason that makes the passions potentially dangerous, none more so than anger, to which Seneca devoted three books of psychoanalysis (*De Ira*). Essential to the ontology of the passions (*affectus*, *Ira* 1.3.4) is that they are born from impulses which find their source in nature (*Ira* 1.3.4); these impulses combine with human volition and reason to form incorrect judgments (*Ira* 2.1.4), resulting in harmful actions to oneself and others. Anger, for instance, actual or perceived (*Ira* 2.3.4), is the rationally conditioned impulse to take revenge for a wrong, or alternatively it may spring from thwarted hopes (*Ira* 3.30); but in contrast to grief, anger does not occur in accordance with nature (*non naturalis*, *Ira* 1.7.1), insofar as it transforms the mind only for the worse (*Ira* 1.8.3) and will not submit to the dictates of reason (*Ira* 1.10.4). Anger may even lead to committing the "sacrilege" of raging against nature (*Ira* 3.21.1).

The dynamics between reason and emotion are one of the more complex areas of Senecan thought (see, e.g., the physiological stages of angry response, *Ira* 2.4.1). Here Seneca extends the central preoccupation of his precepts for social behaviour to his psychological analyses, insofar as they are connected with the ethical struggle for mastery

over exterior influences of fortune. Power over oneself (i.e. *potestas*, and its opposite, the loss of self-control, *impotentia*: see, e.g., *Ira* 2.2.1, 3.36.3) is the ultimate gain in what Seneca frequently figures as a contest between mastery and servitude; by regular turns, Seneca will work the rhetoric of the master–slave relationship into producing a variety of paradoxical instructions for the purpose of fortifying one's mental autonomy in the face of adversity. *De Clementia* (= *Clem.*) which reads as the counterpart to *De Ira*, puts Senecan philosophy to the most rigorous test when advocating mercy to the person with the greatest political power at Rome, the young emperor Nero. At one point Seneca figures Nero's supreme power as a form of servitude, as he is held in bondage to his universal fame just as the gods are to heaven (*Clem.* 1.8.3). Under scrutiny of the entire world young Nero must hold himself to the highest ethical standards, and show restraint when exercising his power; he should align his power with nature's law (*Clem.* 1.19) while mastering any impulses to cruelty and violence (*Clem.* 1.25–6). In spite of an initially peaceful reign, however, Seneca's exhortational strategies did not sink in. In the end the praxis of imperial life outmatched all ethical principles.

When aligning philosophical values with political and social circumstances, the practical results for the individual self are manifold and far-reaching. Political engagement, involvement with friends and family, and even emotional responses are put to ethical mediation. The guiding principle of Senecan therapeutics is to avoid subjecting oneself to the anxieties produced by political ambition or emotional surfeit. For the lifelong project of gaining mastery over the self Seneca again finds metaphorical traction with the roles of master and slave: you find liberty by serving god (*VB* 15.7), and should follow divine providence rather than be dragged by fate (*VB* 15.6). The fullest implications of freeing oneself from any form of circumstantial bondage will be considered in their most stunning, most harrowing manifestations in the *Epistulae Morales* below. Here self-mutilation and even suicide are proffered as acceptable means of self-control in situations of no escape.

The Care of the Self, unto Itself: *Epistulae Morales* (*Moral Letters*)

Of all Seneca's prose, the *Moral Letters to Lucilius* have proved most influential. The style and content of this massive collection made lasting impressions on pre-modernist writers such as Montaigne, Bacon, Spinoza, Rousseau, and Emerson. From the mid-eighteenth century, interest in Seneca in the English-speaking world would languish, as Stoic thought was interpreted as proto-Christian asceticism, but Seneca continued to affect continental thinkers like Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Heidegger.

As literature, the *Letters* develop in and through the genre of letter-writing already made popular in Roman culture by Cicero's and Ovid's publications, and take the formal tactics of "epistoliterarity" to a new stage of literary expectation (for the special position of the *Letters* in literary history, see Henderson (2004), Marchesi (2008) 1–16), and Willcox (2012). For one, the letters are divested, resolutely, of dates and addresses, as well as of the transient particulars of current social and political events; by depriving his Roman reader of familiar points of reference, Seneca endeavors to enroll the reader, of his own time *and also* every time, in the arduous process of Stoic therapy. Both

sender and recipient are thereby situated not locally but universally. That Aulus Gellius (*Attic Nights*, 12.2.2–13), writing in the mid-second century, discusses excerpts from a now-lost book 22 suggests, for one, that the letters were arranged by Seneca himself as we have them. But across the surviving 20 books the 124 letters are not arranged according to an ostensible symmetry or pattern. One can "construct" design or thematic responsion between letters and across books, but epistolary expectations are challenged at every turn as the readerly impulse to systematize textual narratives is put to rigorous, unforeseeable tests.

The format of the epistle, with its fictions of private conversation between intimates, is ideally conducive to self-analysis and self-dialogue: the rhetorical relationship between sender and addressee may be construed as analogous to the ideal, "higher" version of the self offering guidance and counsel to the "lower" part of the self which is in need of ethical improvement. The metaphor holds true only in part, because Seneca frequently admits to his own shortcomings, and is subject to the same conflicts of desires for which his addressee Lucilius seeks counsel. Lucilius Junior, a younger contemporary, one-time governor of Sicily, occasional poet, and Stoic enthusiast, is figured in the most generic of terms, serving as surrogate for each subsequent reader.

It is still in question whether the self in Seneca may accurately be called a "divided self" in a modernist sense. At the forefront of Seneca's discourse on the self is the prevalence of personal and reflexive pronouns, which serve to figure the self as constantly in dialogue *with itself*, divided between an "objective" version of an idealized, superior self which instructs the flawed, "subjective" self towards psychological holism and conformance with virtue. The opening words of the very first letter inaugurate the enterprise thus: "In this way you must get down to it, my Lucilius; master yourself, for yourself": *ita fac, mi Lucili; vindica* ***te tibi*** (*Letters* 1.1). This overriding attention to the care of the self, in strategy and in rhetoric, has produced a host of competing views on what the Senecan self actually is, and the debate continues over whether Seneca establishes an epistemic break in the ontology of the self between the "participant-objectivist" model of antiquity and the "subjective-individualist" of modernity (Gill (1996) and esp. (2006); on construction of the self in the tragedies, see Buckley in this volume). Recent interest in the nature of the Senecan self was spurred by Michel Foucault (1984), who argued that Seneca was radically innovative in his model of selfhood: no longer subject to the views of the community to determine his personal value and moral rectitude, the individual had the potential to care for, correct, and validate his own self under his own power and assiduous cultivation. This understanding of the Senecan self as a prototype for the Cartesian *ego* – private, interior, in possession of a privileged, "subjective" access to itself – has since been challenged: a divided self is fully consistent with Stoic notions of the self as partitioned into objective, naturally endowed parts which seek rational, psycho-ethical integration (Gill (2009) 65–83), and the Foucauldian emphasis on creativity, volition, and pleasure is at odds with Stoic notions of self-containment (Bartsch (2006) 232–54). Scholarly debate is ever motivated by the uncertainty Seneca himself implants, since nowhere does he technically articulate a concept of the self.

Whether or not the Senecan self is ontologically unique or merely a byproduct of literary technique, the useful potential of self-analysis may be appreciated when we consider various instances of *meditatio* (the internal examination of one's conscience to induce harmony between philosophical principles and practical challenges), and the

related mental exercise of *praemeditatio* (the anticipatory rehearsal of enduring future ills; *Letters* 26.10, 37.4, 65.15–21, 104.16). In conjunction with the task of locating one's position in the cosmic order of nature, society, and family, knowing the self also entails eliminating concern for those most intimate and innately human "external indifferents," the body and, indeed, mortality and death. For Seneca, self-knowledge is connected primordially to self-mastery, and throughout the *Letters* he espouses various methods for overcoming the fear of pain, violence, cruelty, and death itself in order to achieve the sublime mental tranquility of the *sapiens*. Death is inevitable and, thus, fated for all; the means of dying are unpredictable and, thus, subject to fortune. But even in the face of death it is possible to overcome fortune, the prime adversary of the Stoic *proficiens*, and gain mastery of oneself by learning to acquiesce to fate willingly. Seneca puts his paradoxical prescriptions to the most demanding trials by adducing a myriad of spectacular case studies, and parsing their most gruesome and graphic details in scintillating declamational detail for their full therapeutic value.

Training one's mind to be indifferent towards the frailty of the body and the threat of death requires an ongoing regimen of habilitative intellectual practices. To this end (indeed, to The End), one should devote a significant part of one's daily routine to contemplating the inevitability of death and the infinite, omnipresent possibilities of dying. In this so-called *praemeditatio*, Seneca advocates that we counterbalance (though, crucially, not replace) our constant preoccupations with those nearest and dearest to us with the constant awareness that we might be suddenly taken away from them by death: "With assiduous effort we should think as much on our mortality as on those whom we cherish" (*Letters* 63.15). The process of the *praemeditatio* requires, literally, "projecting one's mind" onto all future mishaps which are not only likely to be wrought by fortune, but which are simply possible (*Letters* 91.4). Nor, for that matter, should the epistemic separation of the soul from present circumstances be done without the assistance of philosophy; where necessity cannot be avoided, philosophy can open a "path" to gaining control over a compulsory situation (*Letters* 37.3).

Again, Seneca applies the paradoxical reversal of master and slave, in a retooling of Epicurus, to figure servitude to philosophy as the ultimate form of freedom (*Letters* 8.7); the paradox is reinforced when freedom is portrayed as an enclosure, with philosophy providing a wall which fortune's tricks cannot breach (*Letters* 82.5; for the endless reversals of master–slave roles in Seneca, see Edwards (2009) 139–59). One of the most profound implications of rigorous contemplation of mortality is that time itself is collapsed into an eternally present temporality: to fear future ills or to sorrow for past grievances causes suffering in the here and now (*Letters* 74.34: Ker (2009a) 160–87). Only the mental state of the tranquil sage actually shares in the eternity of the divine.

In principle, mastering death by cultivating an assiduous mental acquiescence to its inevitability induces inner peace; the whims and banes of fortune can always be controlled if not avoided. But what if death does not happen in an instant, but under agonizing circumstances? No problem, Seneca says, because history proves that the mind can overcome any bodily pain. Seneca's favorite exemplum for physical endurance (*patientia*) is Mucius Scaevola, a Roman soldier of the late sixth century BC who was captured while attempting to assassinate the leader of an invading enemy. Rather than confess the details of his mission under threat of death by fire, Mucius willingly thrust his right hand into the flames as proof of his fearlessness, thus earning his cognomen

"Left-handed." For Seneca, the legend would become a classic exemplum of *patientia*, analyzed many times for its lessons about volition, physical endurance, and personal integrity. In fulsome detail he describes how Mucius watched calmly as his hand was melted away by the flames to the bare bones until the enemy removed the fire (*Letters* 24.5; cf. 66.53). As his own "spectator," Mucius effectively distanced his mind from the vulnerability of his body, commanding his impossible situation. (On bodily torture in the *Letters*, see Edwards (1999) 252–68; on *patientia* in Seneca, see Bartsch (2006) 164–182.) By rejecting bodily pain as an "indifferent," Mucius reverses his slave-role to become master, and maintains control over his mental integrity under the most severe compulsion.

Mucius was spared death. For the consummate therapeutic lesson – the voluntary surrender to death at the hour of necessity – Seneca draws not from Roman history but from anecdotal lore, recounting the voluntary suicide of a captured German soldier. Sold into slavery to a gladiatorial school, the German briefly excuses himself to the lavatory before a morning training session, only to asphyxiate himself by stuffing a rancid toilet sponge down his throat (*Letters* 70.20–21). This story teaches us that the most disgusting death is preferable to the most tolerable form of slavery, and dramatizes a principle central to Senecan ethics: fate is influenced by the power of free choice, and death itself is embraced as a form of mastery over circumstance. Seneca also indicates the universality of this lesson, applicable to noble-born Romans and slaves alike: in praising the bravery of this man, the use of *vir* suggestively confers on this captive foreigner the citizenship of a free Roman adult male. Here, a non-Roman slave becomes master of his destiny by displaying his contempt for death: the act itself of assenting to and not being dragged by fate redefines his civic and social status.

Since death is inevitable, all that stands in its way is human will. Not long after composing his collections of letters Seneca had to confront his own advice when he was sentenced to suicide by Nero. For all the seeming contradictions between his private lifestyle and publicized morality, the death of Seneca has been received as the supreme example of philosophic self-control – and has echoed through the ages (Ker (2009b)).

Seneca was fond of quoting Dido's dying words, and found an incantatory quality in "I have lived, I have completed the course granted by fortune" (*Aeneid* 4.653). This repeated quotation – self-directed words to die by (*Letters* 12.9; *VB* 19.1; *De Beneficiis* 5.17.5) – instantiates the Senecan mode of reiterative refinement, as he revisits persistent problems about the volitional assent to death, and how to instruct ourselves not simply to cope with but also to master our destinies (on the use of Dido's words in *Letters* 12.9 specifically, see Mann (2006) 103–22). There is no record that Seneca himself uttered Dido's words as he opened his wrists. As an example of how we might talk ourselves into accepting the inevitable, however, this mantra defines what the appropriate Stoic (Senecan) attitude should be towards living and dying: not one of morbid obsessiveness and masochistic behaviour, but one of relief and serenity that comes with the rejection of mortal suffering as the premier act of Stoic indifference. Just as the *sapiens* has mediated his selfhood with the cosmos and various echelons of society, once the self has been reconciled with its own self, the *animus*, that tiny, unquantifiable portion of divine *ratio* in which we all partake, comes to be master over all externals, including the body and its limited lifespan.

L. Annaeus Seneca, *Stoicus Sui Generis*

"Epicurus" inquis "dixit. quid tibi cum alieno?" quod verum est, meum est.
(*Letters* 12.11)

"It was Epicurus," you say, "who spoke those words. Why are you colluding with the other camp?" If something's true, it's mine.

It is difficult to convey the special sense of this pithy *sententia* in English: the responsive chiming of "*verumst-meumst*" elides transcendent, philosophical truth with the author's particular selfhood, while the selfhood of *meum* may be construed generically, coaxing the reader to identify with the *modus operandi* of Seneca's philosopher *ego* and, consequently, of philosophical Truth (*veritas*). Seneca brings the first book of his moral epistles to a close with a brief explication of this stalwart assertion of truth and its universal applicability, irrespective of doctrinal provenance. As the concluding sentiment of the first, programmatic book of the *Letters*, the epigram generates expectations of what is to follow, and also how the reader should receive the moral lessons.

This self-conscious act of excerption is typical of Senecan procedure in the rest of the moral epistles, and arguably for his special brand of Roman philosophy *in toto*. Of paramount interest for Seneca is the practical applicability of philosophical doctrine to daily life. Symptomatic of his own often critical adherence to Stoicism are the satirical critiques of Stoic logicians, and the vanity of sophistic argumentation (cf. *Letters* 45, 111). If it is incorrect to label him an apostate, Seneca is a Stoic insofar as he finds useful advice from their school more than any other, *and not* to the exclusion of others. Even poetry can furnish words to meditate, live, and die by. Throughout his writings, Seneca refers to those who share his position with a cannily (provocatively?) generic first-person plural "*nos*," and only exceptionally with "*nos Stoici*."

When faced with a corpus constructed by a poetics of excerption, it is perhaps inevitable that scholarly discussion of Seneca commonly proceeds along similar lines. As Seneca excerpts liberally from various philosophical schools, historical events, legend, and daily life, in order to arrive at a deeper, eminently practical understanding of Truth, so too will scholarly analyses excerpt liberally from across the Senecan corpus to thematize the outlying principles of his ethics. Such analysis raises the question of the advisability of synthesizing "Seneca" into a unified field theory. Should we not respect the formal and intellectual demands of different genres, not just on the language of philosophy, but on the philosophical ideas such language describes? What difference do conventions of essay, letter, or scientific enquiry make to Seneca's ontology of the self? (Ker (2006) 19–42.)

"My" Seneca has also been analyzed according to predetermined themes. I have restructured his ethics according to a scheme which posits the self at the center of concentric relations to the cosmos and god at the outermost circle of influence, to political, social, and domestic community, and finally to the self as such – a scheme defined by the second-century AD Stoic Hierocles (cf. Stobaeus 4.671.7–673.11). One of the casualties in retrofitting this theoretical framework over Seneca is aggregational thrust: an atomized, reconstituted Seneca lacks declamatory "sweep," the rolling waves of exhortatory prose that can only be experienced in swathes of text. Nor should my

approach obscure the *interconnectedness* of Seneca's enquiries into the ethical, physical, and natural. The *Consolatio ad Marciam*, for example, ends with a vision of an apocalyptic fire which compares to the purgative flood of *NQ* 3, while *Letter* 99 is itself firmly rooted in the genre of consolation for the bereaved. Death is everywhere in Seneca, as prevalent in the *NQ* as the *Essays* or the *Letters*.

Arguably, "my" Seneca is not a static, perfect, even proto-Quintilianic whole, but an individual assiduously engaged in the unfinishable life-project of becoming the perfect *sapiens*. Constituting Seneca, man and book, into a "con-mediated" unity may be a key challenge for his readership. As Seneca arrogates all schools of thought *as well as* all forms of literary expression for his unique brand of therapy, he endeavors to teach us how a self can indeed become holistically integrated in accordance with nature's reason and virtue, and how we may become "proficiently" masterful over any vicissitude of fortune while we "progress" towards consummate wisdom along any – every – walk of (literary) life.

FURTHER READING

The best point of departure for the aspiring *proficiens* are the various companion volumes and collections of essays by some of the leading scholars of Seneca and Stoicism more broadly: the fruits of a more purely philosophical approach to Senecan thought are compiled in and by Inwood (2005a); the collection of essays edited by Volk and Williams (2006) brings together philosophical, historical, and literary perspectives on Seneca, as does the collection edited by Fitch (2008); explorations of the nature of the Senecan self and selfhood abound in Bartsch and Wray (2009); and for new initiates and Stoic adepts alike the companion edited by Bartsch and Schiesaro (forthcoming) promises to synthesize and reappraise centuries of scholarship on Seneca and his enduring influence. All translations here have been my own and new translations of Seneca's entire corpus are forthcoming from University of Chicago Press.

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CHAPTER 12

Senecan Tragedy

Emma Buckley

Preliminaries

Readers of this volume who have consulted chapters on Neronian philosophy and politics will already have encountered the towering figure of Lucius Annaeus Seneca (born Cordoba, Spain, *c.* 4 BC: see Griffin (1976) for more on Seneca the man). Senator, tutor to Nero, and for a time one of the most powerful men in Rome, this prolific writer seeks in his philosophical works not only to understand the nature of the universe but also to comprehend the place of man in it: the ways in which he can become most perfectly human in a day to day struggle with the vagaries of fortune and the imperfections of his own soul. (See the chapters of Doody and Mannering in this volume; Bryan, also in this volume, sets this Stoicism in a broader Neronian intellectual milieu.) The reader familiar with this "Seneca" cannot fail to be shocked when turning to the tragedies. For in the place of order, progression, and providence, the eight plays Seneca has left us offer instead a claustrophobic sense of repetitive regression, figurative and sometimes literal devolution into chaos, and an almost uniformly bleak view of human existence (on the medieval assumption that there were in fact two Senecas, see Mayer (1994); cf. Ker (2006) 19–41).

The titles of the plays – *Agamemnon*; *Hercules* (*Furens*); *Phaedra*; *Trojan Women*; *Medea*; *Oedipus*; *Thyestes*; *Phoenissae* (unfinished) – reveal that Seneca has not just taken on Greek myth but also classic Greek tragedies (two other works, attributed to Seneca but not by him – *Octavia* and *Hercules* (*Oetaeus*) will be discussed separately below). Yet while Seneca displays an evident and important intertextual awareness of his Greek models, his works are clearly more than mere translation or imitation. Familiar themes from the world of Seneca *philosophus* abound: individual self-governance and the dangers posed by any overwhelming passion; the intimate connection between the physical world and man's soul; the power of language to shape the self and construct

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reality. But these ideas are reflected in a deforming black mirror, for in the tragedies the Senecan voice that counsels moderation in all is ostentatiously sidelined, and becomes the province of impotent servant-figures and choruses detached from the action. Center-stage is rather occupied by masterful "overreachers" compelled by various kinds of passion (*furor*): the passion for power, passion inspired by love or hatred, or the passion induced by a malevolent divine figure. These overreachers, driven by a demonic energy and rhetorically self-aware, charged verse, dominate dramatic works in which evil often triumphs, forcing their audience not only to confront gory on-stage carnage, but also the brutal depiction of absolute power.

The result – a claustrophobic worldview which revels in the "drama of the word" – has not been to the critical taste of every generation. Yet it was a crucial influence on the European Renaissance, possibly the most famous theatrical period of all, and it still has the power to appall and thrill today (on early modern reception of Seneca, see S. Braund in this volume; the "Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama" (*APGRD*), based at Oxford University, is a helpful resource for those interested in recent productions of Seneca; cf. Stroh (2008)). And it should be stressed at the outset that "Senecan tragedy" is not a monolithic entity. While all the plays invoke similar systems of imagery and dwell obsessively on the corrupting empowerment of passion, the dramas also reflect a continuous effort to experiment, to create deeply individual, thought-provoking, and challenging drama. Senecan tragedy allows evil to triumph, but it also explores the ironies of victimhood, guilt, the role of fate in suffering and the operation of "classic" Roman virtues, courage (*virtus*) and duty (*pietas*) in the face of tyranny. In this chapter, I will focus on three works in particular – *Medea*, *Thyestes*, and *Hercules Furens* – to sketch the major critical approaches to its interpretation and offer some sense of the "flavor" of Senecan tragedy. Examining the philosophical or moral impact of the dramaturgy, and how "poetics" contribute to "political" interpretation, I'll finish with a brief look at an early emulative response to Seneca's dramatic works – the historical play *Octavia* – and set Senecan tragedy in its broader contemporary reception context, with some final reflections on its relationship to Nero and Neronian literature.

Tragedy and Philosophy

The opening to Seneca's *Medea* will give us a good idea of the imperial tragedian's *modus operandi* and offer a clear sense of the considerable distance in style, structure, and thematics between the Neronian play and the most famous literary source for his work, Euripides' *Medea*. The dramatic conditions at the outset of both plays are roughly the same: in Euripides' version Jason has already married the Corinthian princess Glauce, while Seneca's Medea finds herself abandoned by her husband before the wedding has taken place, her situation lamented by her Nurse (for further comparative analysis of the two plays, see Hine (2000) 14–15; on Seneca's prologues more generally, see Tarrant (1976) 157–61; Anliker (1960)):

NURSE: I wish the *Argo* never had set sail,
had never flown to Colchis through the dark
Clashing Rocks; I wish the pines had never

> been felled along the hollows on the slopes
> of Pelion, to fit their hands with oars –
> those heroes who went off to seek the golden
> pelt for Pelias. My mistress then,
> Medea, never would have sailed away
> to reach the towers of Iolcus' land;
> the sight of Jason never would have stunned
> her spirit with desire.
>
> (Euripides, *Medea* 1–7 (trans. Svarlien))

The Athenian play thus introduces the action with an address which roots the first scene within the mythological context of the Argo-story and offers a steer for how we might see Medea: a sympathetic, love-struck figure who, we go on to learn, is currently lying desolate with grief in her home (20–29). We might expect Seneca's prologue to follow suit closely, not least because these lines have already become a hot-spot for literary imitation among Roman poets: Ennius' *Medea Exul* (*Medea in Exile*) and Catullus 64, a mini-epic on the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, to name just two important precursors to Seneca, take on Euripides' opening as a challenge to be reworked (on Ennius, see Jocelyn (1967) CIII and Boyle (2006) 71–3; for Catullus 64.1–7, see Thomas (1982); Zetzel (1983)).

But Seneca does not join in the fun: there will be no room at all, indeed, for the Nurse in the opening act of Seneca's *Medea*. Instead, Medea herself dominates from the beginning of the Senecan tragedy: and her concern is not to lament the past but plan for the future. Offering little contextualizing help, Seneca's Medea immediately launches into a kletic prayer which first appeals to the gods of marriage and the deities of the world above (1–5), quickly shifts to call upon those to whom it is more "right" to pray – ominously enough, the gods of the underworld (7–12) – and, after musing on possible kinds of revenge to take against Jason (19–36) and the necessity to come up personally with crimes (*nefas*, *scelus*) that exceed her past atrocities (37–50), ends with an eventual summons to her own resources to deal with the problem, in a terrifying command to harness her own "madness" or "irreason" (*furor*):

> accingere ira teque in exitium para
> furore toto. paria narrentur tua
> repudia thalamis. quo uirum linques modo?
> hoc quo secuta es. rumpe iam segnes moras:
> quae scelere parta est, scelere linquenda est domus.
>
> (Seneca, *Medea* 51–5)

Arm yourself with wrath and prepare yourself for destruction with all the *furor* you possess. Let the story of your divorce be the same as of your marriage. How will you leave your husband? The same way you followed him. End already this sluggish delay: the home that was born by crime, by crime must be abandoned. [All translations in this chapter are my own.]

Within 55 verses, in other words, Seneca's Medea has established total dominance over the play and committed to a plan of vengeance that is *already* overdue. Such a bold and prematurely realized vision of the tragedy's outcome leaves little room for dramatic tension, plot development, or sympathetic characterization: and Seneca is clearly is making no effort to reprise the "innovation effect" of Euripides' drama, whose shocking denouement, infanticide, lurks at the outset in the Nurse's suggestion that Medea hates her children and is perhaps planning something "new" (Euripides, *Medea* 36–7: it is possible that Euripides was not the first to offer this ending: see Hine (2000) 13 and Mastronarde (2002) 52–4 for discussion and bibliography). Seneca is clearly not interested in escaping the now canonical end to this chapter of Medea's story: from the very beginning of the Senecan tragedy, Medea is already climactically primed and ready to fulfill her role: this "Cloud of Evil," in C. J. Herington's memorable phrase (1966: 449), seems ready to burst. Instead, it is Medea's self-obsession (a typical feature of the Senecan tragic protagonist) and supernatural status (unlike Euripides' play, this tragedy repeatedly stresses Medea's magical powers: cf. Hine (2000) 175–6) that drive this tragic plot. Indeed, her eventual triumph, a triumph that she revels in (v. 991, 1016f.), constitutes in Jason's eyes proof that she has displaced the gods: "Go on high through the lofty expanse of heaven: testify, wherever you go, there are no gods" (*Per alta uade spatia sublime aetheris, / testare nullos esse, qua ueheris, deos*, 1026–7). Euripides' Jason had responded to infanticide with a demand for justice and retribution (Euripides, *Medea* 1389f.), bearing witness to Medea's crimes in prayer to Zeus (1405–14, *marturomenos* (1410); cf. *testare*, above): in the final words of Seneca's *Medea*, Jason accepts the futility of the powers of the gods above in the face of Medea's potent infernal divinity.

This Senecan tragedy offers, then, a view of the world determinedly far distant from the providential vision of the philosophical works and the dramatic mores of classical Greek tragedy. (See Tarrant (1978), (1995) on important antecedents to Seneca in Hellenistic and Roman drama; cf. Dingel (1985).) And though Seneca never references his dramatic works in his prose teaching, the sense that his tragedy offers some sort of moral or more specifically "Stoic" response to that philosophy has proved irresistibly attractive to audiences of Senecan tragedy. Many twentieth-century readers of Seneca have identified a "shared" moral outlook in the plays and philosophy (cf. Pratt (1983); Wray (2009)), and argued for an implicitly didactic role for the tragedies: in *Medea*, for example, the dramatic illustration of the injurious emotion of anger (*ira*; cf. *Medea* 51–2, above), serves as counterpart to Seneca's *De Ira* ("On Anger": cf. esp. Nussbaum (1994) 439–83). Another angle on this approach can be found in T. G. Rosenmeyer's (1989) study of the cosmological imagery and action of the plays, which, he argues, showcase the physics of a Stoic universe at work as nature reacts to evil and teeters on the brink of cataclysm (cf. Segal (1986), (2008); Henry and Henry (1985)) and most recently, Gregory Staley's (2010) argument that the tragedies are themselves an exercise in Stoic epistemology, an assertion of a Stoic "poetics"). But for every reading of the play that illustrates the ethical lessons to be learned from Senecan tragedy, there is also an "anti-Stoic" one: a reading of the plays that stresses their "negative" Stoicism, the

extent to which Stoic doctrine is challenged and subverted (cf. Dingel (1974); Henry and Henry (1985); Boyle (1997); Schiesaro (2003)).

To start from the assumption that the drama is merely extension of Seneca's personal philosophical outlook, ''designed to propagate his creed,'' is clearly wrongheaded (the phrase belongs to Mayer (1994: 151), who traces the genesis of this approach in the Neostoic interpreters of the sixteenth century: Hine (2004) provides an excellent counterpart to this piece). Yet readings of the plays that work with rather than against the Stoic grain can provide exciting insights. *Medea* obsessively dwells on the psychological interiority of its protagonist. Despite her audacious opening, Medea will struggle to carry out the program of revenge she has scripted, torn between the competing demands of hatred for her husband and love for her sons, and clearly conscious that irrational passion is driving her (see esp. vv. 893–977). Christopher Gill has argued that the kind of vacillation we can see in such speeches – the way in which, as Medea herself puts it, her heart is driven in two directions at once, like a boat trapped in cross seas (939–44) – expresses a sense of immanent psychological disintegration that reacts against the Stoic ideal of the ''complete'' personality, the *sapiens* whose hallmark is a marked internal coherence and unity of mind (see Gill (1997) 215–8; (2009); cf. Bartsch (2006) 255–81 and Lefèvre (1981) on such paradoxical ''unfreedom of freedom''). Alessandro Schiesaro, on the other hand, suggests that it is precisely Medea's ability to harness her ''irrational'' self, her acceptance of her natural ''passionate'' nature, that allows her not only to achieve her revenge, but also to accomplish the impossible, the re-assumption of her virginity in her infanticide (Schiesaro (2009), (1997). Cf. Guastella (2001)). On Schiesaro's reading, it is those who own and identify with their passions who succeed in the deviant world of Senecan tragedy.

The work of both ''pro-Stoic'' and ''anti-Stoic'' readers of the tragedy shows that, in H. M. Hine's term (2004: 204), Senecan drama is ''good to think with,'' encouraging the kind of ethical reflection which enriches, rather than impoverishes, the literary and dramatic force of Senecan tragedy. Clearly, however, the ethically illustrative potential of tragedy is just one aspect of Senecan tragic ''selfhood.'' For such psychological incoherence from the ''Stoic'' perspective rubs up against an over-determined sense of complete dramatic and metaliterary self-awareness. From the outset, *this* Medea already knows the role she is destined to play: in the prologue alone, we find pointed recollection of other ''Medeas,'' not only Euripides' (e.g. vv. 37–40 with Euripides, *Medea* 887–8) but also Accius', Apollonius', and Ovid's (cf. 7–8 with Apollonius' *Argonautica* 4.95–6; Ovid's *Heroides* 12.78–80; 20–1 with Accius fragment 515 Ribbeck). Such close contact with her character's own literary history is a recipe for the construction of what A. J. Boyle has called ''autarchic selfhood,'' a capacity for self-determination which ''manifests itself ubiquitously and conspicuously in the ability of characters to construct their identity and their domination of the world in language'' (1997) 175; cf. Fitch and Eldruff (2008)).

Such domination coincides with the rigorous control of language itself, the exhibition of a conscious declamatory artifice (Boyle (1997) 15–31; cf. Hook (2000). More generally on Seneca's rhetoric Wilson (2007); on speech and style, Canter (1925); Billerbeck (1998); Mayer (1990); on figurative systems of language and imagery, Pratt (1983); Henry and Henry (1985); Mastronarde (2008)). Seneca's manifest delight in

"stunt rhetoric" – hyperbolically ornate figures of language and snappy *sententiae*; rapid-fire dialogue; ambitious monologues, self-apostrophe and messenger speeches – was famously deplored by T. S. Eliot, who carped that Seneca's "characters all seem to speak with the same voice and at the top of it; they recite in turn" (Eliot (1986) 78; see S. Braund for more on Eliot's role in the rehabilitation of Senecan tragedy in other respects). But Seneca's close attention to language and the ability of language itself to construct "reality" speaks to the heart of Neronian literary, artistic, and cultural preoccupations (see esp. Bartsch (1994); Erasmo (2005) 101–140; on artifice and reality in the visual sphere, see Lorenz in this volume).

A good example of the power of Senecan rhetoricity occurs in *Medea* Act 2, with our anti-heroine in conversation with her Nurse:

NVT: Siste furialem impetum, alumna: uix te tacita defendit quies.
ME: Fortuna fortes metuit, ignauos premit.
NVT: Tunc est probanda, si locum uirtus habet.
ME: Numquam potest non esse uirtuti locus.
NVT: Spes nulla rebus monstrat adflictis uiam.
ME: Qui nil potest sperare, desperet nihil.
NVT: Abiere Colchi, coniugis nulla est fides
nihilque superest opibus e tantis tibi.
ME: Medea superest: hic mare et terras uides
ferrumque et ignes et deos et fulmina.

(*Medea* 157–67)

NURSE: Check your infuriate assault, child: even silent passivity will scarcely protect you.
MEDEA: Fortune fears the brave, crushes the weak.
NURSE: Courage must be applauded – if there is a place for it.
MEDEA: It can never be that there is no place for courage.
NURSE: No hope guides the way out of these dire straits.
MEDEA: He who can hope for nothing, never despairs.
NURSE: The Colchians have left you; your husband is unfaithful; none of your great wealth survives.
MEDEA: Medea survives: in me you see sea and land, iron and fire and the gods and thunderbolts!

This brisk back-and-forth exchange of lines (*stichomythia*) is not so much conversation as verbal duel: Medea parries the thrust of the various arguments of the Nurse, reiterating to divert or reverse her. (Note the overlapping vocabulary of *locum uirtus/uirtuti locus*, 160–1; *spes/sperare, desperet*, 162–3; *superest/superest*, 165–6. For other such "passion-restraint" scenes, in which a subordinate attempts unsuccessfully to persuade the protagonist, see Tarrant (1976) 192–4; Boyle (1997) 157.) And when Medea suggests that "it can never be that there is no place for courage," or that "he who never hopes, never despairs," she is deploying gnomic nuggets, the kind of eye-catching *sententiae* that clearly belong in the verbal arsenal of a teacher of rhetoric, and to an

educational system prizing intellectual suppleness in argument (it was of course Seneca's job to teach the young Nero rhetoric: cf. Tacitus, *Annals* 13.2).

Obviously this kind of sententiousness is contrived. But its distancing effect is entirely appropriate, for it well portrays a Medea who considers herself beyond ordinary human standards of conduct, the owner of a cosmos-embracing nature (166–7) and superior to Fortune. Such is the thrust of 170–2, as at blistering pace in the give and take within a single line (*antilabe*) Medea caps a flurry of references to flight with a final promise:

NVT: Moriere. ME: Cupio. NVT: Profuge. ME: Paenituit fugae.
NVT: Medea. ME: Fiam. NVT: Mater es. ME: Cui sim uide.
NVT: Profugere dubitas? ME: Fugiam, at ulciscar prius.

(*Medea* 170–2)

N: You will die. M: I want to. N: Run away! M: I'm tired of running.
N: Medea – M: I will be. N: You are a mother. M: For what father I am mother, look.
N: Do you hesitate to escape? M: I *will* escape: but I'll take revenge first.

Interrupting the Nurse, Medea combines "psychic aggression" (Braden (1985: 62) with the rhetorical flourish of literary self-determination: in declaring that she will become "Medea," she displays an independent grasp of her own self-hood, a self to be fully realized only when she has committed the great crime of infanticide. Or, as she herself puts it far more pithily as she resolves to commit child-murder, "Medea – I now am," *Medea nunc sum* (910). (On the perverse "Stoicism" of Medea's attitude to Fortune, see Bartsch (2006) 266; on Medea's cosmically destructive nature, Braden (1970); Henderson (1983) 94; Rosenmeyer (1989) 166–8. On the desire for *self*-destruction in Senecan tragedy, see Boyle (2011) 307.)

Seneca provides one final twist on the combination of "irreason," sense of literary determination, and rhetorical capacity in *Medea*. Senecan tragedy often plays not just with the notion that its dominant protagonists can construct "reality," but also that in some sense they are "authors" of their own plays, dramaturges and scriptwriters who instantiate their own "performance" of revenge (See esp. Boyle (1997) 112–36; Schiesaro (1994), (2003) 26–61.) Medea's determination is to create a "revenger's tragedy," and it is no accident that when she commands herself at the start of the play to "stop dallying" (*rumpe segnes moras*, v. 54), she echoes the master-poet Virgil's own command to himself to "stop dallying" and return to his current theme of song (*en age segnis / rumpe moras*, *Georgics* 3.42–3). But Medea is not simply a deviant poet-figure: she also has a keen sense of the spectacle of performance. When she finally has her revenge, she recognizes that the one element missing in the murder of the first child is the lack of Jason as spectator (993–4). Drawing out the second murder before her husband's eyes to torture him further (1014–6), she rams the point home: *lumina huc tumida alleua*, */ ingrate Iason. coniugem* ***agnoscis*** *tuam*? ("Lift up those swollen eyes to me, ungrateful Jason. Do you recognize your wife?" 1020–1; cf. 905–7, 976–7, 1001): Aristotelian *anagnorisis* has become the stagily aware matter of Medea's own self-recognition (cf. Bartsch (2006) 226; Johnson (1988).)

Such marked attention to the "spectacularity" of Senecan drama invites brief comment on the performance context of Senecan tragedy. Older arguments that Seneca's drama was written not for public performance in the great theaters, but for reading or recitation in declamation halls and private salons – arguments prompted partly by the changing nature of theatrical experience (see esp. Boyle (2006) 160–88), and partly by the judgment that these plays are problematic to stage (see esp. Zwierlein (1966)) – have been largely superseded. Critics have shown just how much dramaturgic awareness can be seen in these texts (Boyle (2006) 192–4; Harrison (2000); Kragelund (2008); Stroh (2008)), recent work on Roman oratory has deconstructed the distance between the performance cultures of declamation and acting (Easterling and Hall (2002)), and in what is clearly a clinching argument, Senecan tragedies have been and still are being successfully staged. At the same time, it is important to stress just how spectacular Seneca's "visualization in words" is (Fantham (2000) 23): in daring the "unstageable" rhetorical flights of, for example, the extispicy of *Oedipus* (vv. 291–402 with Fitch (2000) 9–11; Boyle (2011) lxi), Seneca presses the imaginative potential of *phantasia*, an event present in the mind's eye (cf. Staley (2010), esp. 96–120), offering his audience a psychologically interior reception of the tragic works which mirrors the imaginative realities constructed by the protagonists of the plays themselves.

"Let no new thing arise": Senecan Intertextuality

The Senecan protagonist drives revenge, then, through an artfully constructed and self-aware metatheatrical prism, employing a rhetoric of amplification to outdo past crimes and past tragedies. We have already seen Medea search for that which is *maius* or *peius* – greater, or worse – in her quest for revenge, as she consciously scripts *nefas*, not simply "sacrilege," but literally "that which should not be said" (*nefandus*, from (*ne*)*fari*, "to (not) speak of"; cf. vv. 7–8, 12). Other Senecan tragedies display the same obsession with iteration and excess, and with voicing what should be kept quiet (see esp. Schiesaro (1994); (2003) 16–19, 43). The Fury who introduces the action of *Thyestes*, a conflict between the brothers Atreus and Thyestes, revels in such a cycle of *nefas*:

> certetur omni scelere et alterna uice
> stringatur ensis; nec sit irarum modus
> pudorue, mentes caecus instiget furor,
> rabies parentum duret et longum nefas
> eat in nepotes; nec uacet cuiquam uetus
> odisse crimen: semper oriatur nouum,
> nec unum in uno, dumque punitur scelus,
> crescat.
>
> (*Thyestes* 25–32)

Let them compete in every crime, drawing their swords in turn. Let there be no limit to anger, no sense of shame: let blind *furor* goad their spirits. Let their fathers' madness endure and their descendants inherit long-lived *nefas*. Let there be no leisure for any to resent an old crime: but may always new ones arise in proliferation, and let evil deeds grow as they are avenged.

The Fury's gleeful encouragement of the perpetuation of *nefas*, collapsing crime and vengeance for crime into an ever-devolving cycle, is directed in particular at two members of the house of Pelops, who are locked in immediate conflict: the subject of the play will be Atreus' revenge against Thyestes, who prior to the action of the play usurped his power and committed adultery with his wife. But the Fury's words speak to a more general feature of Senecan tragedy, its relentless repetition and paradoxical "originality," where "[t]he world changes," as A. J. Boyle (1997: 59) neatly puts it, "to stay the same": this tragedy invokes the spirit of the originator of the tragedy's cycle, Tantalus, at the outset, and looks forward to the cycle of violence that will continue on into the next generation, as crime pursues Atreus' descendants into and beyond the Trojan War (one aspect of the myth already handled by Seneca himself in *Agamemnon*: cf. Tarrant (1976) on vv. 26–7).

Emulative *nefas* is certainly at the heart of *Thyestes*, which will unleash a punishment for crime which is itself a worse crime: the tragedy will conclude with Atreus feeding the unwitting Thyestes his own sons in a cannibal banquet. But the repetitious drive to always let some new thing arise in Neronian tragedy also encapsulates aptly the dense intertextual energy of Senecan dramaturgy, which re-inhabits and transforms the familiar texts and contexts, of, above all, Augustan Rome (Dingel (1985)). Perhaps most influential for *Thyestes* is the "Tereus episode" of Ovid's epic *Metamorphoses* (6.412–674), a gruesome tragedy of lust, rape, and revenge that survives fully now only in epicized Ovidian form. Starting with the Thracian king Tereus' ill-omened marriage to the Athenian princess Procne (6.426–32), it will end with Procne's revenge against her husband, who, crazed with lust, has raped, imprisoned, and even mutilated her sister Philomela, cutting the tongue out of her mouth so that she cannot tell of the violation she has suffered. After learning of Tereus' violence through a tapestry woven by Philomela, Procne rescues her sister, then conceives her revenge: since "crime is *pietas* for Tereus' wife" (6.635) she will feed her son Itys to his father in order to avenge her sister, repaying one violation with another. Simulating a "special" custom, in which Tereus must dine alone, she feeds the boy to his father at a banquet. And when Tereus calls for his son, Procne can no longer cover up her cruel delight:

> "intus habes, quem poscis" ait: circumspicit ille
> atque, ubi sit, quaerit; quaerenti iterumque vocanti,
> sicut erat sparsis furiali caede capillis,
> prosiluit Ityosque caput Philomela cruentum
> misit in ora patris nec tempore maluit ullo
> posse loqui et meritis testari gaudia dictis.
> (*Metamorphoses* 6.655–60)

> "You have within the one you demand," she said. Tereus looked around to see where Itys was: and as he searched and called out, Philomela, her hair spattered with infuriate slaughter, leapt forward and thrust the bloody head of Itys into his father's face, never wishing more that she had the power of speech and could bear witness to her joy with suitable words.

Ovid's voyeuristic delight in the excess and paradox of this nefarious narrative has long made the Tereus-episode one of the most discomforting bits of the *Metamorphoses*

to read. It also deeply informs Seneca's *Thyestes*, for Atreus' act of revenge against the brother who stole his kingdom and wife will be to murder Thyestes' children, then feed them to him in a banquet only too reminiscent of Ovid's Itys-feast:

> quidquid e natis tuis
> superest habes, quodcumque non superest habes
> . . .
> epulatus ipse es impia natos dape.
> (*Thyestes* 1030–1, 1034)

> You have whatever of your sons remains; whatever does not remain, you have that too . . . You yourself have dined on your sons, an impious banquet.

Seneca's appetite to compete with Ovid is evident throughout the play (see Tarrant's (1985) notes at *Thyestes*, 103f., 257ff., 269f., 704, 707–14, 765ff.), and here we see him re-stage the feast as something bigger and worse: in place of one boy-meal, three; in place of one sickening description of the slaughter-cooking process (*Metamorphoses* 6.643–5), two (*Thyestes* 691–781, 1053–68); in exchange for Philomela's silent appearance and wish for speech, a drawn-out exchange between the brothers, in which Atreus gloats over his success and critically appraises his own performance, pointing out areas for improvement. It is no accident that the literal feast at the end of *Thyestes* is bigger, for everything else in this play is too: the Fury who sets the tragedy in motion has actively lobbied for a greater version of "the Thracian crime," (*Thracium fiat nefas / maiore numero*, 56f.). Seneca's intertextual approach thus underpins the iteration and amplification of *nefas* that is at the thematic heart of the play itself.

Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, whose epic tales of transformation often already intrude transgressively upon the generic boundaries of tragedy, provides further fertile ground for Senecan tragedy. Though Ovid never actually takes on the story of Oedipus in his tragedy-oriented "Theban" stories in *Metamorphoses* 3–4, the particular cluster of "foundations" already associated with this archetypal city of the "Other" lurks in the background of Seneca's *Oedipus*. Simultaneously, a typical feature of the epic – the creation of beautiful but dangerous elegiac landscapes, invaded by shocking, often erotically driven violence – is resurrected again in Senecan tragedy, above all in *Phaedra*. (See Segal (1986); Littlewood (2004) 259–98: on Ovid's engagement with tragedy, Gildenhard and Zissos (1999), (2000), (2007).) Ovid's lost tragedy *Medea*, glimpsed elsewhere in his own amatory and epic works, must have influenced Seneca's own tragic heroines in ways we cannot now reconstruct (on Ovid and Seneca, see esp. Jakobi (1988) and Hinds (2011)). The heroines of Ovid's elegiac epistles the *Heroides* are another important source (for *Medea*, see Trinacty (2007); for *Phaedra*, see Littlewood (2004) 260–304).

Part of the game for Seneca, then, is to outdo the already genre-busting Ovid. But if we return to the Fury-prologue of *Thyestes*, it is clear that the tragedy is powered by another important intertextual relationship, for while this hellish creature draws her energy from the constant evils perpetrated by the inhabitants of the house of Pelops, she is also powered by her likeness to another Fury in Augustan literature, Virgil's Allecto (cf. esp. *Thyestes* 83–6 and *Aeneid* 7.335–40: further parallels and bibliography

in Schiesaro (2003) 32–6). In the *Aeneid*, this malign force who brings "hell on earth" to Italy is the agent of and closely aligned with Juno, the goddess who uses the power of the underworld to disrupt what looks to be the successful *telos* of Aeneas' epic mission by stirring up war and madness. Seneca, then, is using the *Aeneid* for quite a specific purpose when he writes his Fury, "Muse of *scelus*" ("crime": Schiesaro (2003) 29), along such Virgilian lines: the energy of hell associated with Juno in the *Aeneid* fuels the *nefas* of *Thyestes* (on Allecto and the "energy of hell" in the *Aeneid*, see esp. Hardie (1993) 57–86; on Juno/Allecto as driver of plot in the *Aeneid*, Feeney (1991) 116–50; on the symbolic resonance of the underworld for Seneca more generally, Owen (1968)).

Thyestes is not the only Senecan play to co-opt the "proto-tragic" force of the *Aeneid* (see Fantham (1975); Putnam (1995) 246–85; Schiesaro (2003) 32–4, 84–6). The effect of such an approach is even more obvious in Seneca's *Hercules*, for here the instigator of tragedy is not anti-heroine (*Medea*) or Fury (*Thyestes*), but – quite remarkably for a tragic oeuvre that for the most part has ejected an Olympian divine apparatus – the goddess Juno herself (the only other interventions of *superi*, "gods of the heavens," in Senecan tragedy – Neptune in *Phaedra*, Apollo in *Agamemnon* – are also malign in action or intent). This decision once again marks a pointed change in both structure and thematic intention from the most famous Greek model for the play, Euripides' *Herakles Mainomenos* (cf. Boyle (1997) 106). As in Euripides, Seneca's protagonist will return victorious from the Underworld, only to be sent mad, and kill his wife and children. Coming to his senses, he considers suicide before finally going into exile with Theseus, trapped in a living Hell. But while Euripides' play challenges the audience to make sense of the nature of divinity itself, with Hera engineering an attack on the innocent and conspicuously rational Herakles half way through the play (Griffiths (2002)), Seneca moves his Juno front and centre:

> Soror Tonantis – hoc enim solum mihi
> nomen relictum est – semper alienum Iouvem
> ac templa summi uidua deserui aetheris,
> locumque caelo pulsa paelicibus dedi.
> (*Hercules*, 1–4)

> "Sister of the Thunderer" (for this is the only title I'm left with), I have abandoned ever unfaithful Jove and the mateless regions of the upper sky, and I have given up my place in heaven, pushed out by rival mistresses.

The angry lamentation which starts *Hercules* clearly reworks the beginning of the *Aeneid*: the Virgilian epic itself begins with a furious Juno, piqued by the continuing success of Aeneas and the Trojans despite her best efforts to destroy them (*Aeneid* 1.37–49). As the Senecan prologue develops, we see further traces of both Virgil's Junonian "beginnings," the speech of *Aeneid* 1 and its counterpart in *Aeneid* 7 (Morelli (2007)). The declaration of Senecan Juno that "peace expelled, fierce pain will wage everlasting war" (*saeuus dolor / aeterna bella pace sublata geret*, v. 28–9) recalls Juno at the outset of the *Aeneid*, plagued by fierce pain (*saeui dolores*, *Aeneid* 1.25) and nursing an everlasting sense of injury (*aeturnum seruans sub pectore uulnus*, *Aeneid* 1.36); her final words – a disgusted assessment of her own humiliation – seal the associations

between Augustan epic and Senecan tragedy, for in the end of Virgilian Juno's speech is the beginning of the Senecan tragedy:

> ast ego, quae diuum incedo regina Iouisque
> et soror et coniunx, una cum gente tot annos
> bella gero. et quisquam numen Iunonis adoret
> praeterea aut supplex aris imponet honorem?
> (*Aeneid* 1.46–9)

> But I, who walk in majesty as queen of the gods, both sister and wife of Jove – I am waging war with a single people for so many years! After this will anyone worship the divinity of Juno, or humbly burden her altars with signs of honor?

Seneca conspicuously harnesses the power of the disaffected Juno of the *Aeneid*, then, as his own vengeful goddess goes on to summon up the forces of Hell: a clear reprise of Juno's work in *Aeneid* 7 (Fitch (1987) 116–18). Yet there is a further twist. The malign goddess of the Augustan epic always operates at one remove, working out her nefarious plot through her subordinate Allecto. But as tragic Juno realizes that the only force available to vanquish Hercules is Hercules himself, she too adopts *for herself* the inward-turning method of revenge she schemes for Hercules:

> ut possit animum captus Alcides agi,
> magno furore percitus, uobis prius
> insaniendum est. – Iuno, cur nondum furis?
> me, me, sorores, mente deiectam mea
> uersate primam . . .
> (*Hercules*, 107–11)

> For Hercules to be driven insane, roused by great *furor*, you must be made mad first. Juno, why do you not yet rave? Madden me first, sisters, driven out of my mind . . .

Collapsing Virgil's model of "Juno plus Fury" into "Juno Inferna" (Fitch (1987) 117), Seneca does not simply inflict a "greater and worse" Juno on his own, much-suffering, hero in the *Hercules*: he prompts, only to problematize, the corresponding anticipation that Hercules will be another kind of Aeneas, undergoing tests of *pietas* and *virtus* ("dutifulness," "courage": cf. Otis's (1964) influential reading of the competing demands of *furor* and *pietas* in the *Aeneid*). In the *Aeneid* Hercules had already served as an exemplary standard of heroism for Aeneas, battling the monstrous Cacus in a fight styled as the triumph of cosmic order over chthonic disorder and as heroic precursor to Aeneas in the Underworld (as Charon remarks, *Aeneid* 6.392–6: cf. Hardie (1986) 110–17). With the Senecan tragedy taking its dramatic start from Hercules' triumphant return from Hell, a Hell that bears a distinct resemblance to the Underworld of the *Aeneid* (see esp. 658–61 with *Aeneid* 6.264–7; Fitch (1987) 293; Morelli (2007) 35–6), the tragedy creates the sense of a mutually reinforcing relationship between the two texts, mythical priority working in dynamic tension with literary belatedness.

It is no surprise, then, that Seneca's Hercules has been interpreted as just such another Aeneas, an unjustly oppressed character who must set aside his *furor* and prove his *virtus*

(in the play, in his decision to endure the consequences of his kin-murder through his choice to live: cf. Motto and Clark (1981) 101–17; Lawall (1983) 6–26). But unlike the *Aeneid*, there will be no Jupiter to intercede or halt the excesses of Junonian hatred. More worrying still, Hercules' pride and arrogance set him far apart from the hero of the *Aeneid*. Hercules' *virtus* goes to terrible extremes in this tragedy (see esp. Boyle (1997) 106–7), while his great exploits, both before, during, and after he is sent mad, are driven by *ira* (anger). Juno's attack upon herself to prompt Hercules' self-destruction is pointed: in his egotism and self-regard, Hercules is already a Junonian figure. When crazed, Hercules imagines making his way to heaven by violence, in an overreach which will ally Virgil's paradigmatic imposer of Olympian order with the rebel Giants against Jupiter (*Hercules* 965–81; cf. 63–74): but such ambitions are merely an exaggeration of the arrogant assumptions he had already displayed about his readiness for deification. Virgil's Hercules had provided a solution to the problem of cosmic disorder; Seneca's Hercules is symptomatic of it. This Hercules is clearly the architect of his own downfall in a way which makes the protagonist's own behavior, not simply Juno's, the central problem of the play (cf. esp. Shelton (1978)).

Seneca's *Hercules* does not merely re-frame the master-text of the Augustan age within a Neronian tragic prism, then. In evoking and then exploding Virgilian *virtus*, Seneca's work may not be so much distorting as revealing some of the problems with the nature of *furor* and the operation of power already in that epic. Reading Virgil through Seneca, we should be troubled anew by behavior of Aeneas himself at the epic's end: is Aeneas' own infuriate killing of Turnus, which conspicuously reprises the Junonian anger of the *Aeneid*'s beginning (Putnam (1995) 201–45), the inspiration for the complex moral questions of *Hercules*? Seneca's tragedy of passion may or may not offer a sense of redemption in the final choice of Hercules to avoid the self-destruction Juno had planned and instead live with the blood of his family on his hands: it is an imitator of Seneca who finally gets Hercules to heaven, in the *Hercules Oetaeus* (cf. Boyle (2006) 211–3; Walde (1992); Averna (2002)). But in its close allusive relationship with Virgil, *Hercules* certainly subjects the depiction of power in the *Aeneid*, both human and divine, to revisionary critique. As Alessandro Schiesaro has neatly put it, "Senecan tragedies question the discursive assumptions on which the *Aeneid* was built, and shatter any optimistic ideals that it may have nurtured" (2003: 208). Perhaps the most shocking thing about the paradoxical originality of Seneca's tragedy is that no new *nefas* has really arisen: the dramaturgy's piling of crime on crime merely explicates the power dynamics already inherent in Augustan Rome's foundational epic.

The Politics of Senecan Tragedy

While Seneca's nephew Lucan harnesses Virgil's nefarious energy of Hell to write his epic *Bellum Civile* as an "anti-*Aeneid*" (see Hardie in this volume), Seneca himself uses his close allusive relationship with the Augustan epic to contaminate it in retrospect. Such a contamination is no mere game with words, for to critique the vision of power that the *Aeneid* provides is to come uncomfortably close to critique of empire itself. It is no surprise, then, that Senecan tragedy's obsessive concern with power and the abuse of power has generated criticism that seeks to place these dramas within the larger

social and political context: a context dominated by the egomania and tyrannical power displayed by Nero himself. Yet given Seneca's long career and his direct experience of autocratic power – exiled by Claudius and clearly no fan of Caligula (who is heavily criticized in *De Ira*) either – we should not assume that all the tragedies were written in the Neronian period. At least one play – *Hercules* – was written during Seneca's exile in Corsica between AD 41 and 49, and is parodied in *Apocolocyntosis* 7, the satire written for Nero's accession in AD 54. (See Whitton in this volume; for a chronological ordering of the tragedies based on stylistic grounds, see Fitch (1981), who argues for three phases of composition. First, *Agamemnon*, *Phaedra*, and *Oedipus*; next, *Hercules*, *Troades*, *Medea*; finally, *Thyestes* and the unfinished *Phoenissae*. Cf. Nisbet (1990).) It is likely, as with the prose works of Seneca, that the tragedies were composed throughout Seneca's career.

Whether strictly "Neronian" or not, Senecan tragedy certainly creates in its mythological drama contexts, settings and language that are distinctively Roman (Walter (1975); Tanner (1985)). When Seneca's Greek and Trojan figures talk of home and household gods, they use the Latin *lares* ("gods of the home": cf. *Medea* 224; *Oedipus* 258; *Hercules* 917; *Phoenissae* 344; *Agamemnon* 392a). Their armies look, behave, and fight like the Roman army (cf. e.g. *Thyestes* 184–5; *Phoenissae* 390, 398–400, 578; *Troades* 125, 332–3, 677). Argument between characters often has a distinctly Roman legal flavor – the system of judgment in the Underworld, according to Theseus in *Hercules*, is arranged along the lines of the Roman court system (*Hercules* 731–4 with Fitch (1987) 310), while the language of Roman divorce law abounds in *Medea* (Guastella (2001)). Cultic acts – in particular the perverse human sacrifices that occur in *Thyestes* (of Atreus' children) and *Troades* (of Polyxena and Astyanax: cf. also esp. *Oedipus*, 291–402, a Roman animal sacrifice and inspection of entrails, *extispicium*) – show awareness of the niceties of Roman ritual.

Such Roman "color" is not mere background flavor: rather, it is part of a deeper system of resemblance between the world of the plays and contemporary Rome. To take *Hercules* again, we find the people designated as the *plebs* (*Hercules* 738; cf. *Phaedra* 1139; *Thyestes* 400; *Troades* 1077), and Lycus boasting, like a typical *novus homo*, that he has achieved power without reliance on noble ancestry (*Hercules* 337–41), in an echo of the longstanding and still current conflict between "new men" (*novi homines*) and established families (*nobiles*). Hercules himself, styled "author of peace" by Amphitryon (*pacis auctorem*) and imposing peace on the world, is behaving in a manner that obviously evokes the *pax romana*, especially given that Ovid had already granted the same moniker to Augustus (*Hercules* 250, 882–90; cf. *Ex Ponto* 1.32 on Augustus as *auctor pacis*).

Given the clear Romanizing intent of the tragedies, it is all the more pressing, then, to regard the discussions of power and justice within the world of Senecan dramaturgy as relevant for and related to the world of contemporary Rome. This is seen perhaps most obviously in *Thyestes* – set in Greek Argos – where the chorus strikingly identify themselves as *Quirites* ("Romans," 396), and offer a view of the world that obviously comes from a Roman geopolitical perspective (*Thyestes* 369–79; cf., e.g., *Medea* 364–79, *Troades* 382–5). In this Ode (336–402), the chorus offer a typically Stoic discourse on the dangers and discontents of power, advising that the true king is not he who is desirous of rule, in thrall to the fickle mob, but that the truly happy man – the true *rex* (king) – is the private citizen. Yet the Stoic sensibility of the passage gains sharper political point with the deployment of language and sentiment from the *Odes* of Horace,

the Augustan poet who, within the "private" frame and personal voice of the lyric *ego*, tensely negotiates the arrival of the principate in Rome and contributes in such major fashion to the "Augustan program" (Tarrant (1985) 137; on Horace and Augustus, see, e.g., Lowrie (2007), esp. 82–85; Oliensis (1998) 102–53).

The incursion of this "Horatian" lyric voice within the tragedy thus invites a perspective on the tyrannical rule of Atreus in which the articulation of the real power dynamic between emperor and subjects becomes measure for the "virtual" tyranny of Greek myth: if the chorus are Roman citizens, then Atreus in this play can be imagined as Roman emperor. And while Horace's lyric voice asserts what Ellen Oliensis has termed a "poetics of potency" (Oliensis (1998) 102), the Senecan chorus of *Thyestes* is markedly naive, ignorant, and powerless: the independent power of the vatic voice has been appropriated by the autocratic Atreus in this play, and pointedly there is no force (*vis*) in the song of the minor characters of Senecan tragedy. (On the chorus, see Boyle (1997); Davis (1993); Castagna (1996); Hill (2000); Amoroso (2006); on Seneca and Horace, Stevens (1999).)

It is perhaps inevitable, then, that the Roman flavor of the repeated debates about the nature of "just rule" and the exercise of power in Senecan tragedy should prompt reflection not only on "private" self-mastery and/or impotence for contemporary audiences, but resonate as literature written "in the shadow, or rather, glare, of its ruler" (Gowers (1994) 131: see, e.g., *Thyestes* 215–7; *Troades* 258–9; *Phoenissae* 660; *Hercules* 341–5, 737–45). Seneca, after all, also wrote *De Clementia*: not only a philosophical guide for the young Nero, but also practical handbook, with the political aim of the maintenance of secure governance through the exercise of mercy (see Griffin (2000) 542–3; Braund (2009); Bryan in this volume). Some critics have been drawn to regard the tragedies, which return to and subvert the ideal qualities of duty, justice, mercy, and virtue espoused in Seneca's political-philosophical thought, as the coded acknowledgment of the failure of this project, and an act of covert dissidence (Calder (1976); Lefèvre (1985a), (1985b); Henry and Henry (1985) 157–76; Rudich (1997) 17–106 looks at such "dissidence" in Senecan prose). More provocatively, William Calder III (1983) has argued that it is precisely the brutal model of absolute power wielded by Atreus in *Thyestes* that is the real model of didaxis for Nero: *Thyestes*, not *De Clementia*, is training manual in tyranny for the young *princeps*.

However tempting it is to see the tragedies as acts of political defiance, doctrinaire assumptions about the intentions behind Seneca's depiction of power in the tragedies, or attempts to break any supposedly pre-programmed "code," are bound to fail (cf. Bishop (1985)). Senecan dramaturgy is simply too dense, challenging, and polysemous to be pinned down in such a fashion. But we have in the Senecan corpus as transmitted to us an early response that takes precisely this line, using Senecan tragedy (and in particular *Thyestes*) as the material for a depiction of Nero himself as monstrous "Atrean" tyrant. The unknown author of *Octavia*, a historical play (*fabula praetexta*) probably written in the early Flavian period and attributed to Seneca himself, makes the events of AD 62, Nero's divorce of his first wife, Claudia Octavia, the basis for a depiction of the emperor that harnesses the power of evil within the tragedies to the politics of the Neronian court (see Boyle (2008); Wilson (2003)).

Anticipating and reversing the construction of Nero in the later biographical tradition as actor-emperor, "the self-inventing Tyrant who plays with identity as transgression"

(Henderson (1989) 191; cf. Elsner and Masters (1994)), the Nero we see on-stage in *Octavia* conspicuously adopts the "autarchic selfhood" modeled in Senecan tragedy and re-envisages the rise of the Principate not as *pax augusta* but as cycle of *nefas* (cf. esp. *Octavia* 492–529 with Buckley (2012)). And for this "Nero," a character who has internalized the essence of Senecan tragedy, Seneca got it wrong when he preached clemency as the path to the stars: Nero proclaims that divinity will be his, so long as he first removes whatever is hostile to him with savage sword (*saeuo . . . / ense*, 530–1; contrast *De Clementia* 1.10.3). Character-Nero makes Senecan tragedy his blueprint for rule, despite all the protestations of Character-Seneca, who in this play is reduced to the bit-part of *satelles*, the subordinate powerless to resist the brute power of his master (cf. Calder (1983); Manuwald (2003)).

Octavia ends with its virtuous heroine condemned to death by a Nero who has demanded bloody vengeance against not only his wife, but the people of Rome (829–33). The chorus is left with the final words:

urbe est nostra mitior Aulis
et Taurorum barbara tellus.
hospitis illic caede litatur
numen superum.
ciuis gaudet Roma cruore.
(*Octavia* 977–82)

Aulis and the savage land of the Taurians are gentler than our city. There the gods' divinity is satisfied by the blood of foreigners. Rome delights in citizen blood.

Octavia's fate is worse than Iphigenia's, Rome's barbarity greater than the Taurians', who famously practice human sacrifice. The author of *Octavia* presses to conclusion the notion that contemporary Rome offers tragedies worse than Greek myth. But this *fabula praetexta* does provide some suggestion that evil will not in the end triumph. Revitalizing the Senecan ghost-Fury, the shade of Agrippina comes from the Underworld to predict future doom for Nero (*Octavia* 593–645), while Octavia achieves the iconic heroic status of a Lucretia or Verginia, other virtuous women who died for Rome. Senecan tragedy proper offers no such consolation. This bleak "Tragedy of Evil" (Opelt (1972)) is not just appropriate index of Neronian tyranny: its complex, demanding, and sometimes horrifying verse continues to challenge audiences to make sense of *nefas* unchecked today.

FURTHER READING

The best place to start with Roman tragedy in general is Boyle (2006); see also Erasmo (2005). Good collections of essays in English are to be found in Boyle (1983); Fitch (2008); Volk and Williams (2006); Bartsch and Wray (2009). Important general monographs and articles are Herington (1966); Braden (1970); Shelton (1978); Henry and Henry (1985); Segal (1986); Boyle (1997); Schiesaro (2003); Littlewood (2004).

The *Oxford Classical Text* of Zwierlein (1986) is standard. The translations of Fitch (2002–4) and Slavitt (1992) are very good; see too the select translations of Watling (1966); Wilson (2010); Smith (2011). Individual commentaries: *Agamemnon*, Tarrant (1976). *Troades*, Fantham (1982);

Boyle (1994); Keulen (2001). *Phaedra*, Ahl (1986); Coffey and Mayer (1990). *Hercules Furens*, Fitch (1987); Billerbeck (1999). *Medea*, Costa (1973); Hine (2000). *Oedipus*, Töchterle (1994); Boyle (2011). *Thyestes*, Tarrant (1985). *Phoenissae*, Barchiesi (1988); Frank (1995). *Hercules Oetaeus*, Averna (2002). *Octavia*, Ferri (2003); Boyle (2008).

On questions of dating and performance, see Fitch (1981); Nisbet (1990); the collection of essays in Harrison (2000); Kragelund (2008). On contemporary performance of Seneca, see the "Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama," (http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/). On Senecan metatheater, see Boyle (1997); Schiesaro (2003); Erasmo (2005). On Seneca's sources, see Tarrant (1978), (1995); on the role of the chorus, see Davis (1993); Hill (2000).

Intertextual studies of Seneca concentrate on Virgil (see Fantham (1975); Putnam (1995); Schiesaro (2003)) and Ovid (see Schiesaro (2003); Hinds (2011)). The influence of Horace and Augustan elegy has not been much explored but see Stevens (1999); Littlewood (2004) 260–304; Trinacty (2007). Important explorations of Senecan tragedy and philosophy are Henry and Henry (1985); Rosenmeyer (1989); Nussbaum (1994); Boyle (1997); Schiesaro (2003); Hine (2004); Bartsch (2006); Gill (2009); Staley (2010). On political interpretation, see Calder (1976), (1983); Henry and Henry (1985); Boyle (1997); Schiesaro (2003).

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CHAPTER 13

Lucan's *Bellum Civile*

Philip Hardie

Lucan as Epic Successor and Innovator

The Flavian epic poet Statius, writing an ode in honor of Lucan's birthday to his widow Polla (*Siluae* 2.7: see Malamud (1995)), tells how the Muse Calliope took Lucan into her care at his birth and delivered a prophecy of his career. After juvenile poetic exercises on Trojan themes, in early manhood he will turn to the mighty and dolorous theme of Roman civil war in a poem, the *Bellum Civile*, written before the age at which Virgil had produced the *Gnat* (a poem supposedly written by Virgil in his 20s), and which will outdo the achievements of Ennius' epic on Roman history, the *Annals*, Lucretius' philosophical didactic *On the Nature of the Universe*, Varro of Atax' mythological epic the *Argonautica*, and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and which will command the adoration of Virgil's *Aeneid* itself. That Statius' homage is sincere is suggested by his intensive engagement with the *Bellum Civile* in his own epic on the legendary civil war between brothers at Thebes, the *Thebaid*. Lucan's epic was admired and imitated for centuries after his death, for example by Dante, Goethe, and Shelley. In the nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries the poem was disparaged on the grounds of its hyperbolic and gruesome excesses, and of a subservience to an artificial literary culture of rhetoric. In recent decades, however, it has undergone a thorough critical re-evaluation, to re-emerge as a major expression of Neronian politics and aesthetics, a poem whose studied artifice enacts a complex relationship between poetic fantasy and historical reality. Recent work on the reception of the *Bellum Civile* has also brought out Lucan's importance, for example, for early modern English poets confronting the effects of civil war in national or cosmic histories: Marlowe, Shakespeare, Daniel, Drayton, Marvell, Milton (see Maes in this volume).

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Marcus Annaeus Lucanus was born at Cordoba in Spain in AD 39, the nephew of the philosopher and tragedian Seneca the Younger. He received a rhetorical education at Rome, and probably studied philosophy with the Stoic L. Annaeus Cornutus (see Bryan in this volume). Lucan entered the inner circle of the young emperor Nero, with whom he shared literary interests. Three books of the *Bellum Civile* were published in 62 or 63. He then fell out with Nero for reasons that are uncertain, and in 65 joined the conspiracy of Piso against the emperor, on the failure of which he was forced to cut his veins. As he died he recited some verses of his own describing the death from loss of blood of a wounded soldier (Tacitus, *Annals* 15.70). There is nothing quite corresponding to this in the text of the *Bellum Civile*, but the poem contains many similar spectacles of violent death and suicide. Lucan's death is a political act that combines staginess with the ultimate reality of self-extinction, and suggests a model for reading the *Bellum Civile* as a poem that similarly effaces the boundary between literary performance and politico-historical immediacy. In the culture of the Neronian court it is hardly possible to separate art and reality.

The *Bellum Civile* breaks off, almost certainly unfinished on the poet's death, in the tenth book, and covers events in 49–48 BC from Julius Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon to Caesar's war in Alexandria, with a climax, in the work as we have it, in the battle of Pharsalus between Caesar and Pompey the Great, followed by the flight and murder of Pompey in Egypt (books 7–8). We do not know how far down in time Lucan might have planned to narrate, and different possible terminal dates will affect the reader's sense of the structure and meaning of the work as a whole: possibilities include the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 BC, the defeat of the tyrannicides at Philippi in 42 BC, or Octavian's defeat of Antony and Cleopatra in 31 BC at the Battle of Actium, which finally ended the series of Roman civil wars and led to the establishment of the Principate. If Lucan had planned to end with the suicide of Cato the Younger, in whom some readers see the Stoic hero of the *Bellum Civile*, after his defeat by Caesar at Thapsus in Africa in 46 BC, he might have engineered a satisfying closing link to the poem's opening image of civil war as "a powerful people turning its victorious hand against its own entrails" (1.2–3).

The poets against whom Statius measures Lucan define the place of the *Bellum Civile* within the Roman epic tradition. It will surpass the first national epic, Ennius' *Annals*, but like the *Annals*, and unlike the mythological *Argonautica* of Varro, it is a historical epic. Earlier in the poem Statius had labeled the *Bellum Civile* a *carmen togatum* ("a poem in a toga," *Siluae* 2.7.53), in contrast to epics on subjects from Greek legend, and Lucan's is perhaps the most thoroughly Roman of all surviving Latin epics in its exploration of Roman ideology and values at the moment of their self-destruction. Lucretius and Ovid may seem less obvious points of comparison, but Lucan's equation of the collapse of the Roman state with the reversion to chaos of the natural universe (1.72–80), and the sympathy between events in the natural and human worlds that runs through the poem, construct a cosmos of disorder and unintelligibility in conscious contrast to Lucretius' revelation of the rational structures of the Epicurean universe. The *Bellum Civile* shares with Ovid's *Metamorphoses* the features of paradox, sudden change, and a focus on the violation of the boundaries of the human body and of the self.

The Bellum Civile and the Aeneid

Statius concludes with the still greater claim (*quin maius loquar*, *Silvai* 2.7.79), that "the *Aeneid* itself will venerate Lucan as he sings to the Latins." "Veneration" is euphemistic for the rivalrous and antagonistic relationship that the *Bellum Civile* establishes with its predecessor, the *Aeneid*. *Maius*, "greater," the word with which Virgil had introduced the second half of the *Aeneid*, a "greater work" than the first half (7.45 *maius opus*), and the word with which Propertius had announced Virgil's outbidding of the *Iliad* itself (*Elegies* 2.34.66 *nescioquid maius nascitur Iliade* "something greater than the *Iliad* is coming to birth"), might apply also to Lucan's outbidding of the scale of events narrated by Virgil. The sheer size of siege-works hastily thrown up by the historical character Caesar is exalted over the legendary walls of Troy at *Bellum Civile* 6.48, *Nunc uetus Iliacos attollat fabula muros* "Now let ancient legend extol the walls of Troy." The *Bellum Civile* begins under the sign of comparative excess, as Lucan announces his theme as *Bella per Emathios plus quam ciuilia campos* "Wars more [or 'worse'] than civil waged over Thessalian plains" (1.1), a paradoxical excess since to the Roman mind there could hardly be anything worse than civil war.

Lucan's relation to Virgil is transgressive not just in terms of size and scale, but also of theme and ideology. Whatever further voices the *Aeneid* may contain, its main plot is of a providential teleology, the story of the fate-driven foundation and growth of Rome and a Roman world-order out of the ashes of Troy. It is the etiology of the Augustan Principate as the culmination of history, the era of a new Golden Age of peace and prosperity. The *Bellum Civile* is an "anti-*Aeneid*," in which a "cruel providence" (the title-phrase of Narducci's seminal 1979 study of the poem) works towards the destruction of the centuries of achievement of the Roman Republic. Funeral, rather than triumph, stands at the end of Lucan's version of Roman history. On the day of the battle of Pharsalus an augur in Italy saw clear signs of the battle and its significance, "*Venit summa dies, geritur res maxima*," *dixit* | "*impia concurrunt Pompei et Caesaris arma*." " 'The final day has come, the greatest matter is being decided,' he said, 'the weapons of Pompey and Caesar clash in impious war' " (7.195–6). *Venit summa dies* are the words with which in *Aeneid* 2 a priest of Apollo announces to Aeneas that Troy's last hour has come (2.324). From that ending will come in the fullness of time the greatest city in the world, *maxima Roma* (Propertius, *Elegies* 4.1.1, responding to the Virgilian vision of history); for Lucan's prophet the *res maxima* is the battle that leads to the destruction of the Roman Republic. The *Aeneid* tells of *arma uirumque* ("arms and the man"); Lucan narrates the climactic clash of the arms of two men, Pompey and Caesar. Virgil's "man" is "outstanding in piety [*pietas*]," *Aeneid* 1.10; the arms that fought at Pharsalus are "impious." Lucan comments in his own voice on what was lost at Pharsalus, using more comparatives to denote the excessive quality of that loss, at 7.638–41:

> maius ab hac acie quam quod sua saecula ferrent
> uolnus habent populi; plus est quam uita salusque
> quod perit: in totum mundi prosternimur aeuum.
> uincitur his gladiis omnis quae seruiet aetas.

> From this battle the nations of the world suffer a wound too great for their own age to bear. It is more than life and welfare that is lost; we are overthrown for all time to come. By these swords is conquered every future age of slavery.

Not a new Golden Age, but an eternal age of enslavement to an imperial master. Republican *libertas*, a word used sparingly in the *Aeneid* and in a historical context only with reference to the remote past of the first years of the Republic (6.821, 8.648), is the central value for Lucan, who defines the ideological conflict that defines the post-Pharsalus world as *par quod semper habemus, | libertas et Caesar* "the gladiatorial pair that is always with us, freedom and Caesar" (*Bellum Civile* 7.695–6).

The *Bellum Civile* is punctuated with negative rewritings of moments in the Virgilian providential plot. On the night of the sack of Troy, Aeneas is set on his path into exile, in search of a place to build a new city, by the dream-vision of the mangled and grieving (*maestissimus*) Hector who tells him that Troy is now lost (*Aeneid* 2.268–97). By the end of the book Aeneas will have obeyed Hector's injunction to flee from Troy. At the threshold of the *Bellum Civile* Julius Caesar, arriving at the Rubicon, the boundary between Gaul and Italy, is confronted at night by the grieving (*maestissima*) apparition of the fatherland, in the person of the goddess Roma, her hair torn, who tells him that if he comes as a Roman citizen he must carry arms no further (1.185–212). Caesar appeals to an array of the gods of Rome, including the Trojan Penates handed by Hector to the dreaming Aeneas, and disobeys Roma. As Caesar journeys in pursuit of Pompey after Pharsalus, he comes to the site of Troy, a magnet for ancient tourists (9.950–79). The scene is modeled on Aeneas' visit in *Aeneid* 8 to the site of the future Rome, at that time the rustic settlement of the Arcadian king Evander. Virgil narrates Aeneas' tour of Pallanteum through a kind of double perspective that superimposes images of the magnificent buildings of Augustan Rome on the pastoral landscape of Evander's settlement, measuring the distance travelled from humble past to glorious present. Caesar visits a Troy whose once great buildings have crumbled into unrecognizability (9.969 *etiam periere ruinae* "even the ruins have perished"). The condition of Troy is an image of the wasteland into which Italy itself will turn after the civil war, described in the proem (1.24–32) through an inversion of the positive image of Italian agricultural prosperity with which Virgil paints his hopes of a renewal to follow civil war in the *Georgics*. At Troy the ruinous effacement of the traces of Trojan-Roman history encourages Caesar to further movements of transgression, as he unwittingly steps over the trickle that had been the river Xanthus, and has to be warned by his local guide not to be as disrespectful of the remains of the altar of Jupiter at the centre of Priam's palace as had been the ruthlessly destructive son of Achilles when he murdered Priam at the altar in *Aeneid* 2. The story in *Aeneid* 8 of Hercules' defeat of the monster Cacus on the site of Rome, told to Aeneas by Evander before his guided tour of the site, is reworked in *Bellum Civile* 4.593–660 when the Caesarian general Curio travels to North Africa, landing near the ruins of Dido's and Hannibal's Carthage, and is told the story of Hercules' wrestling match with Antaeus (see Saylor 1982). For both Virgil and Lucan Hercules' defeat of an evil monster foreshadows the virtuous achievements of heroes of Roman history: Aeneas and Augustus will follow in Hercules' footsteps, and Africa will witness the Herculean glory of Scipio's defeat of Hannibal. But in civil war the pattern of typological correspondence is broken: the venal Curio is an anti-Aeneas, and his attempt

to repeat the success of Hercules and Scipio ends disastrously with his death in battle against another African ruler, Juba, in what the narrator presents as a sacrifice to the shade of Hannibal (4.788–90).

The *Aeneid* is an etiology of both Rome and her empire, and of the Julian *gens* and its greatest representative, the first *princeps*, Augustus (adoptive son of Julius Caesar). The *Bellum Civile* is an etiology of the Principate viewed as enslavement to an imperial master. More specifically, and problematically, the proem suggests that the narrative to follow is an etiology for the advent of the emperor Nero, extravagantly praised as a future god presiding over an age of peace, in a passage modeled on the panegyric of Octavian in the proem to Virgil's first *Georgic* (see Grimal 1960; Dewar 1994). All the slaughter of the civil war was worth it, if Fate could find no other way to prepare for Nero, just as Jupiter could not establish his rule over the gods until after the cosmos-shaking war with the Giants (1.33–45). This discrepancy with the complaints later in the poem over the death of liberty and the enslavement of Rome to an imperial master has prompted various attempts at a solution: that the proem was written before Lucan fell out with Nero; or that the poem as a whole is "pure literature," a *reductio ad absurdum* of politically committed writing and which would have been understood as such by Nero (Masters 1994); or that the panegyric of Nero is to be read as satire and parody. There is an uneasy moment at least in Lucan's final compliment when he replaces the traditional gods of poetic inspiration, Apollo and Bacchus, with Nero, on the grounds that *tu satis ad uires Romana in carmina dandas*, "you are more than enough to lend my strength for my Roman song" (1.66). What kind of hypertrophied power is available to a source of inspiration adequate to the transgressive and excessive poem that is the *Bellum Civile*, the *immensum opus* ("boundless work") as Lucan labels it two lines later (1.68)?

Roman Values

For Lucan civil war not only throws into reverse the engine of Virgilian providential history, it also subverts the value system on which the progress of Roman history is based. Just as self-directed narcissistic love short-circuits the proper functioning of human relationships, so the body politic's self-inflicted violence confounds the values that should regulate the Roman's interactions with both Roman and non-Roman. When Roman fights foreigner, the *virtus* that consists in the manly exercise of strength and courage is a virtue. When Roman fights Roman, such *virtus* is no virtue. When Roman makes an enemy of Roman, he attempts in vain to lend legitimacy to what is a crime: *iusque datum sceleri canimus* "I sing of legality conferred on crime" (1.2–3).

This confusion of right and wrong is explored in two episodes of misdirected military courage and strength in books 4 and 6. In the first a group of Caesarian soldiers attempting to cross on a raft from an island to friendly forces on the mainland is trapped by the Pompeians. After putting up a brave but hopeless fight, they choose death over capture, and put each other to the sword, to the last man. Their leader Vulteius fires his men by promising them that they will become an unsurpassed example of *fides* "loyalty" and *pietas* "piety" (4.496–9). They thus form a famous addition to the catalogue of examples of virtuous actions offered for admiration and imitation to the readers of Roman history and historical epic. The narrator acknowledges that they

are indeed an exemplum of a *virtus* that chooses death in order to escape slavery, albeit an exemplum that the degenerate Romans of Lucan's own day will not understand (4.575–81). Yet the freedom defended by Vulteius is that of *not* coming to terms, being reconciled, with other Romans: the refusal of a peace-pact like the *foedera pacis* praised by the narrator at 4.189–205 in the account of a temporary concord (4.190 *concordia*) between Caesarians and Pompeians, which will be shattered by fresh incitement to the criminal discord of civil war. In a simile (4.549–56) the mutual slaughter on the raft of Vulteius is compared to the fratricidal violence of the armies that sprung up from the dragons' teeth sown by Cadmus at Thebes and by Jason in Colchis, mythological images of a monstrous criminality. The solidarity in *virtus* of Vulteius' men is expressed through the quintessential intrafamilial divisions of civil war, as brothers attack brothers, and sons fathers (4.563), leading to a bizarre redefinition of *pietas* (4.565–6, *pietas ferientibus una | non repetisse fuit*, "the killers could show their piety only in not having to strike twice").

The narrator is less equivocal in his judgment on the exploits of the Caesarian centurion Scaeva in book 6 (6.138–262), a kind of one-man army who holds off the massed Pompeians from storming a camp. Scaeva is the outstanding example in the poem of the traditional epic *aristeia*, the feat of arms in which an individual hero demonstrates his military virtue. Lucan introduces him in purely negative terms as (6.147–8) "a man ready for any wickedness (*nefas*), and who did not know how great a crime is valor in civil war (*in armis | quam magnum virtus crimen ciuilibus esset*), juxtaposing *virtus* and *crimen* on either side of the caesura. After extraordinary feats of strength and endurance Scaeva carries a forest of enemy spears fixed in his breast; after the arrival of Caesarian reinforcements, he is worshipped by his own side as if he were the living embodiment of the goddess Virtus herself (6.254 *et uiuam magnae speciem Virtutis adorant*). But in a closing apostrophe to his character the narrator tells Scaeva that he might have been counted blest in the fame of his deeds had they been directed against foreign enemies; as it is (262) *infelix, quanta dominum uirtute parasti!* "Unhappy man, how much valor you expended on acquiring a master!"

Civil war makes enemies of men who should be each other's nearest and dearest, and also effaces the proper distinction between Roman and enemy Other. The *Aeneid* defines what it is to be Roman through a complex process which both distances Aeneas' Trojans and their Roman descendants from, and approximates them to, a range of other peoples and ethnicities. Initial friendship between a Carthaginian queen and Roman ancestor will turn into implacable enmity between Carthage and Rome, and Virgil makes what in reality was the final encounter in the series of first-century BC civil wars, the Battle of Actium, into a clash between west and east, as Italian Octavian confronts an Antony who has gone native with the unspeakable oriental queen, Cleopatra. In the *Bellum Civile* these discriminations are confused. In the first line of the main narrative (1.183) Caesar has already hurtled across the Alps, heading for Italy, in the footsteps of Rome's most dangerous enemy, Hannibal, an equation that Caesar himself makes sarcastically at 1.303–5. When Caesar arrives in Egypt he succumbs to the erotic temptation of Cleopatra far more wholeheartedly than his ancestor Aeneas had indulged himself with that other North African queen, Dido. Lucan paints Cleopatra as the decadent and foreign *femme fatale* who has fascinated later centuries. She is introduced as "the shame of Egypt, the fatal Fury of Latium, whose unchastity cost Rome dear" (10.59–60). She celebrates her seduction of Caesar with a banquet that magnifies the opulence of Dido's

court into the full-blown oriental luxury that will subsequently infect Rome. Earth, air, sea, and Nile are sourced for the foodstuffs served on gold plate, "all that luxury crazed by idle ostentation had sought out all over the world" (10.156–7). In book 8 the narrator had waxed indignant at the fact that Egyptians had dared to conspire against the life of the great Roman Pompey. If Romans have to die in civil war it should be Roman hands that grope into Roman entrails, not the sword of an Egyptian tyrant (8.555–7). Worse still, the actual assassin was a Roman soldier who had so far forgotten himself as to lay aside the Roman legionary's javelin (*pilum*) for the disgraceful weapons of the Egyptian king (8.597–8).

In the *Aeneid* the mortal enmity of Trojans and the treacherous Greeks in the Trojan War is followed by more friendly encounters with Greeks who share the values that Romans will prize, most notably in the alliance between Aeneas and the pious and civilized Arcadian king Evander. In book 3 of the *Bellum Civile* the peace-loving Greek city of Massilia (Marseille) prides itself on its *fides*, the good faith and loyalty that is the core Roman value, and one often denied by the Romans to the Greeks: the Massilians' overtures to Caesar only provoke his anger and the chaotic and violent slaughter of a hyperbolic sea-battle.

Caesar, Pompey, Cato

The *Bellum Civile* has no single hero, its subject matter is not "arms and a man," but "war and a people" (1.1–2 *bella . . . populumque potentem*), the Roman people who drag into their civil conflict the peoples of the world, turning Roman civil war into a world war. More than earlier epics, it is an epic of crowds. Nevertheless there are three outstanding characters in the drama of the struggle between freedom and tyranny, each of whom makes complex demands on the reader's judgment: Pompey the Great (*Pompeius Magnus*), Julius Caesar, and Cato the Younger. The deaths in 54 BC of Julia, Caesar's daughter and Pompey's wife, and in 53 BC of Crassus, the third member of the "First Triumvirate," make inevitable a showdown for supreme power between Pompey and Caesar, memorably presented in a contrasting pair of character sketches (1.129–57). Pompey is the man of the past, Caesar the man of the future, and as the poem progresses Pompey becomes more closely associated with the dying Republic, while Caesar is identified as the destroyer of the Republic and the first of the "Caesares," the Roman emperors. Lucan exaggerates the six-year age difference between the two men to sketch a Pompey in his declining years, addicted to the popular fame won for his past achievements. *Stat m/Magni nominis umbra* "he stood as the shadow of a great name/of the name 'Great' " (1.135), compared in a simile to a lofty and venerable, but dead, oak tree laden with spoils and offerings, but ready to fall at the first breath of wind. Caesar is compared to the force of nature that often blasts tall trees, the thunderbolt which (according to ancient belief) spreads destruction on earth before returning to the sky. The thunderbolt is Jupiter's weapon, and Caesar is a substitute for the chief Olympian who takes no direct part in Lucan's narrative; the hint of a godlike Caesar also foreshadows the practice of deifying Roman emperors, beginning with Octavian's apotheosis of Julius Caesar (a practice for which Lucan expresses disbelief and contempt, 6.809, 7.459). Caesar, famed for his *celeritas* "swiftness," moves at lightning speed.

Not content with mere name and fame, he embodies a *virtus* (here including the meanings "strength," "bravery") that never stands still, unlike Pompey's shakily fixed oak. While Pompey passively enjoys a *fama* "glory" for past deeds, a fame that he will come to experience as a hazard and a burden when he seeks to flee into anonymity after Pharsalus (8.12–32), Caesar's power is magnified by the reports and rumors (another sense of *fama*) that precede his march through Italy (1.466–86), and which determine the course of future action, since the panic induced by the rumors is as effective in turning to flight the inhabitants of Rome as would be the actual sack of the city.

Pompey is inexorably driven from Italy by Caesar, and the senators gather in Epirus as the Roman Republic in exile, naming Pompey as head of freedom's cause. Pompey's great love for his wife Cornelia and concern to remove her to a place of safety are a more private source of weakness. He is reluctantly persuaded to join battle at Pharsalus, and when he realizes that the day is lost he flees, for a mixture of selfless reasons. The events in book 8 span the distance between the nadir of Pompey's fortunes, alone in flight, detached from the Roman people and Senate whose adulation gave meaning to his life, and anxious to shuffle off his great name entirely, and his rehabilitation through death as an undying icon of the lost Republic. Pompey ceases to become a shadow of himself only when he becomes a literal shade in death. Before that moment he is reunited with his wife and with the senators, and is dissuaded from a plan of seeking help from the eastern Parthians that would only have brought shame on his ambition to restore Roman fortunes. Death at the hands of the oriental, rather than alliance, is the route to a transcendent restoration of his fame, in the over-300 lines at the end of book 8 devoted to his death and burial. Faced with the swords of his assassins he finds a constancy and fixity that the rotten oak tree never had, suppressing his groans before the gaze of the theater of posterity and acting out the Roman noble death. His impassivity may not live up to the highest standards of the willing embrace of death by the Stoic wise man safe in the armor of unyielding virtue, since Pompey's behavior is guided by fame not virtue:

> saecula Romanos numquam tacitura labores
> attendunt, aeuumque sequens speculatur ab omni
> orbe ratem Phariamque fidem: nunc consule famae.
> (*Bellum Civile* 8.622–4)

> Centuries that will never be silent about the toils of Rome are watching, and from all parts of the world time to come gazes on this boat and Egyptian treachery: think now of fame.

That fame is granted by the poet in the long coda, in which the humble funeral rites and narrow tomb afforded by one of his supporters to Pompey's headless corpse, tossed by the waves at the shoreline, are contrasted with the universal and undying fame of Pompey, his great name geographically coextensive with the name of Rome.

Caesar's control of geographical space is more active than Pompey's, and he is the subject of the powerful gaze rather than its object. His restless energy, checked only by momentary hesitations, leads him continually to penetrate and transgress in the pursuit of his illegal aims; Milton found in him an inspiration for Satan in *Paradise Lost*. When he arrives in Rome, Caesar throws open the Temple of Saturn and tears out the wealth laid up in store from Roman conquests going back centuries, ransacking Roman history

and making it his own (3.153–68). His ambition to control the world is reflected in his defiance of the storm of cosmic proportions that assails the small boat in which he attempts to cross to Italy in book 5, a storm which threatens a repetition of Deucalion's flood or a reversion to primal Chaos. In Virgil control of the epic storm is a figure for the power of the Roman ruler, supported by the gods, to master the cosmos. The Olympian gods are dubiously involved in Lucan's storm, which Caesar jubilantly proclaims to be a test of his own Fortune (5.591–3).

Caesar is the totalizer, the man who masters everything. *Omnia Caesar erat* "Caesar was everything" (3.108) we are told when he reaches Rome and the paralysis of the traditional organs of government leave him as a one-man state. In the night after Pharsalus, Caesar realizes a more paradoxical kind of universal reach: *omnes in Caesare manes*, "all the ghosts were in Caesar" (7.776), all the shades of those who died in the battle and now return to haunt the victor. Caesar seems unscathed by this vengeful persecution by the ghosts of the dead, and on the following day chooses to glut his eyes on the heaps of their putrefying bodies that cover the battlefield. Once he has sated himself with the slaughter at Pharsalus, Caesar sets off again to track down Pompey (9.950–3). Here his success will be partial; he fails to catch up with the living Pompey, but is able to fix his eyes on another spectacle of death, Pompey's severed head, concealing his joy with crocodile tears. The traces of Pompey that Caesar cannot track down and control are those left worldwide by the fame of Pompey.

Pompey's flawed greatness and Caesar's demonic and amoral power have led some readers to identify the true hero of the *Bellum Civile* in Cato the Younger, the doctrinaire Stoic who takes on the leadership of the republican cause after the death of Pompey. He is first seen in book 2 when Brutus comes to his modest house to seek advice and to try to dissuade him from taking any part in the civil war. For Brutus Cato is *uirtutis iam sola fides* "the sole remaining guarantor of virtue" (*virtus* in its ethical sense), *Bellum Civile* 2.243. Brutus uses language that suggests that Cato is the Stoic wise man untouched by convulsions in the universe. In reply Cato asserts his fearless *virtus* (287), but rejects the impassivity, *apatheia*, that would lead him to confront the collapse of the world with detached indifference, and instead embraces the grief he will feel, like that of a parent, for the corpse of the free Roman state. He will side with Pompey and the Republic. Cato's statement that he cannot remain detached and his admission to feeling sorrow humanize him, but make problematic his status as a Stoic wise man. His main appearance in the poem is in book 9 where he leads his men in a march across the Libyan desert, inviting them *ad magnum uirtutis opus summosque labores* "to a great feat of virtue and the utmost hardships" (9.381). Cato is superhuman, or inhuman, in his capacity to endure. The culminating test of the desert is an encounter with a menagerie of different kinds of snakes whose poisons inflict grotesque forms of death on Cato's soldiers. Cato's *virtus* forces – or shames – his men into enduring these sufferings, and he is present at every death to lend his men the strength to die. "What power could any plague have held over him? He conquered calamity even in the hearts of others, and as an observer taught that great pain is powerless" (*spectatorque docet magnos nil posse labores*, 9.887–9).

Cato's gaze has the effect on his dying soldiers which posterity's gaze has on Pompey when he steels himself to face the assassin's blow without a groan. But when the subject of a gaze directed at a dying man is present in person, coolly detached, rather than conjured up by the dying man's own inner vision, it is hard not to feel some unease.

Responses to Lucan's Cato differ: some see in him the true Stoic saint, a model for the involvement of philosophy in the political and military world; for others his impossibly virtuous behavior makes him a parody of the Stoic wise man.

The Narrator's Voice, The Reader's Gaze

The difficulty in knowing how to react to Cato's extreme *virtus* is part of a wider problem that modern readers have experienced in knowing what to make of the *Bellum Civile*. The question of what the reader (thinks she) knows about the poem and its meanings may in turn be linked to issues of knowledge that are thematized in its characters and manner of narrating.

Cato should be the Stoic hero of the poem, but alienates many readers. Caesar should be the villain, but exerts an irresistible fascination, leading some readers to suspect that Lucan was of the devil's party without knowing it – or perhaps knowing it, and finding that fact unbearable. The energy that carries Caesar on his unstoppable career through the wreckage of the Republic is also the energy that carries the narrator and reader headlong through the poem. Caesar's gigantism is matched by the ambition of a poem that expands from being a narrative about a city, Rome, to embrace cosmic processes on the grandest level. Caesar's gleeful destruction of the traditional structures of the Roman state mirrors Lucan's iconoclastic overthrow of the canonical epic of his poetic "father," Virgil. At the end of the account of Caesar's visit to Troy, the city immortalized by Homer and whose soil, if the *Aeneid* has any power, should preserve the traditions of the Romans' ancestors, Lucan turns to yoke Caesar to his own ambition for undying fame:

> O sacer et magnus uatum labor! omnia fato
> eripis et populis donas mortalibus aeuum.
> inuidia sacrae, Caesar, ne tangere famae;
> nam, si quid Latiis fas est promittere Musis,
> quantum Zmyrnaei durabunt uatis honores,
> uenturi me teque legent; Pharsalia nostra
> uiuet, et a nullo tenebris damnabimur aeuo.
> (*Bellum Civile* 9.980–6)

> Sacred and mighty work of poets! You snatch all things from death and grant eternity to mortal men. Caesar, do not feel jealousy of sacred fame, since, if it is lawful for the Latin Muses to make a promise, for as long as the honor paid to the bard of Smyrna [Homer] lasts, men to come will read me and you. Our Pharsalia will live, and no age will condemn us to the shadows.

The pair of poet and "hero" will not be condemned to oblivion, but this may be a pact with the devil, that condemns both to an afterlife of infamy.

Lucan is much concerned with what is *fas* and *nefas*, "lawful" and "not lawful." Civil war is *nefas*. *Fas* is cognate with *fari*, "to speak," and related to *fas* and *nefas* are the verbal adjectives *fandum* and *nefandum* "speakable" and "unspeakable." The *Bellum Civile* narrates the unspeakable, but perseveres in speaking. At the height of the slaughter at Pharsalus we arrive at the centre of the battlefield where Roman brothers

fight brothers, fathers fight sons. The narrator wishes for that darkness which, in book 9, he promises Caesar will not envelop their poem:

> Here, Caesar, is your rage [*furor*], here your madness, here your crimes. Let my mind fly from this part of the war and leave it to darkness, may no age learn from me, as the poet [*uates*] of such evils, of the full license of civil war. May our tears and complaints rather perish: of your actions in this battle, Rome, I shall be silent [*quidquid in hac acie gessisti, Roma, tacebo*]. (7.551–6)

But Lucan has already said too much and will go on to say more. At the beginning of the poem the issue of speech and silence is raised by a character, one of the sources of prophecy and inspiration in the narrative who function as figures for the poet himself. The Etruscan seer (*uates*) Arruns foresees in the sacrificial entrails the conflict between Pompey and Caesar: "It is hardly right (*fas*) to reveal to men, o gods, all that you are preparing . . . What we fear is unspeakable [*non fanda*]." (1.631–5). Arruns is thus able to wrap his message in a prophetic obscurity unavailable to the poet.

One of Lucan's most memorable creations is the Thessalian nightwitch Erictho, whom Pompey's degenerate son Sextus visits in book 6 with a request for prophecy of the future course of the war. Her witchcraft is so powerful that she is granted every *nefas* as soon as she begins to invoke the gods above (6.527–8). *Furor*, "frenzy, fury," is the condition of the several characters whose agitated utterances mirror the frenzied voice of the poet himself, a state of mind that also matches the madness, *furor*, of civil war. It is invoked programmatically in the narrator's opening rebuke to the citizens of Rome who are both participants in the civil war and the audience for the *Bellum Civile*, 1.8 *quis furor, o ciues, quae tanta licentia ferri?* "What madness is this, citizens, what uncontrolled license of killing?" Erictho, who has unparalleled power over the Underworld and the dead, is the double of a mythological Fury, binding up her hair with wreaths of vipers (6.654–6). She is as unstoppable as Caesar in her drive to penetrate the forbidden. She oversteps the boundary between life and death in practicing necromancy to reanimate a corpse to deliver the prophecy requested by Sextus. Here the reluctance to speak is that of the shade of the dead soldier, unwilling to re-enter its body until Erictho unleashes yet more powerful forms of magic and forces the dead man to speak.

If the narrator should not be speaking, should the reader be listening? A similar question hangs over seeing and viewing. The poem is full of spectators who react in different ways to the objects of their gaze, and the reader is also called on to decide with what degree of engagement or detachment to respond to the spectacles of horror and suffering presented to our view. The *Bellum Civile*'s investment in spectacularity is in keeping with a wider Neronian fascination with shows and spectacles, encouraged by an emperor who liked to make his own person the centre of the shows, in theater, amphitheater, and circus, which had become a central part of the way in which the ruler related to his people (see Fantham in this volume). The poetics of the amphitheater is central to the poem: the use of *harena*, "sand," to refer to the floor of the battlefield places the reader in the arena, while *par* used of pairs of combatants suggests the gladiatorial "pair." Viewing gladiators fighting to the death is to be complicit with the powerful man who produces the games in the amphitheater, in Lucan's day the emperor. Death in the arena is a spectacle that stimulates excitement,

perhaps even compassion, but of a passing kind: the spectator has no larger interest in the fate of the gladiator. That is one model for the reader as spectator. Producers of spectacles cannot always control their reception. Scaeva, as a centurion of Caesar used to proving himself in battle under his commander's eyes, regrets that on this occasion he cannot seek death under Caesar's gaze, but consoles himself that Pompey will applaud (6.158–60). Similes comparing Scaeva to a leopard, an elephant, and a bear present him to the reader as an exotic beast in the amphitheater, reinforcing the sense of Scaeva's *aristeia* as a bizarre and entertaining circus performance rather than an uplifting display of heroism. Cato's snake-bitten soldiers find strength to face an agonizing death knowing that they die under the gaze of their Stoic leader; the reader of these grotesque deformations of the human body, however, may experience something more akin to the Caesar who delights in glutting his eyes on the rotting corpses at Pharsalus.

The Cloud of Unknowing

It can be difficult to know where one should take one's stand in the upside-down world of the *Bellum Civile*. Knowledge, like speech and vision, is problematic in various ways in the poem. Too much may be known, or too little. Some characters yearn for forbidden knowledge. The landscape itself may preserve too much or too little knowledge: the site of Troy no longer retains sufficient visual memories of its past to prevent Caesar from violating its sacred spaces, but the field of Pharsalus will never lose the memory-traces of the unspeakable battle that took place there (7.847–72). There is a particular stake in (un)intelligibility in a poem which is profoundly informed by Stoic ideas. The Stoic universe is one guided by a rational and providential divinity, and although humans may not be privy to all the secrets of Fate, we can be sure that all is for the best in the best of possible worlds. ''Rational,'' ''providential,'' ''best'' are not words well suited for what happens in the *Bellum Civile*, whose world might be better described as a Stoic ordered universe thrown into disorder (Johnson 1987). At the beginning of book 2, after a series of terrifying omens and prophecies of the approaching civil war in the previous book, the narrator wishes that men were blind to the future, so that at least they might continue to hope even as they fear. As he asks the ruler of Olympus why men are afflicted with the additional anxiety of foreknowledge, the narrator raises two possibilities: either the world is governed by an unvarying chain of causality, a Stoic Fate, or all is ruled by chance. The question is left unresolved. The mere possibility of an Epicurean world of randomness undermines the opening address to a ''ruler of heaven.'' This inconsistency occurs elsewhere, so that it is unclear whether we are in a world without gods, or one where the gods are hostile or indifferent to human pain. One of the most innovative features of the poem is its elimination of the machinery of anthropomorphic Olympian gods, traditional since Homer. This is hardly to be understood as a concession to historiographical realism in a poem whose narrative of relatively recent Roman history is in other respects resolutely unrealistic, or surrealistic. One effect is to deny the reader the degree of certainty within an epic fiction that comes from seeing the plans of conflicting gods put into operation in the world of the human actors. The only full-scale appearance of a divinity in the poem is that of the goddess Roma to Caesar at the Rubicon, but she

is powerless to influence events, and might in any case have no more reality than as a personification of the fatherland, *patria*. The most potent form of supernatural power in the poem seems to be that not of the Olympians, but of the forces of the Underworld as channeled through the witch Erictho.

In book 5 Appius, fearful of uncertainty over the outcome of events (5.69, *finem . . . rerum*), forces the reluctant priestess at Delphi to open herself to the full flood of Apollo's inspiration, but Apollo allows her to utter only a brief and riddling prophecy of Appius' own end. In the next book the fearful Sextus Pompey also wants to learn of fate's course in advance (6.423, *fati praenoscere cursus*); when the reluctant corpse is finally galvanized by Erictho into speech, he announces that civil war has infected the Roman shades in the Underworld, but refuses to tell Sextus of what awaits him, deferring more certain knowledge to a prophecy by the ghost of his father, knowledge not received by the end of the poem as we have it. An itch for unattainable knowledge also afflicts the overreacher Caesar. At Cleopatra's banquet in book 10 he asks the Egyptian priest about the hidden source (10.191, *ignotum . . . caput*) of the Nile, applying the word *virtus* to the insatiable "vigor" of his own scientific curiosity. For the flooding of the Nile, Acoreus provides multiple possible explanations, a standard feature of ancient scientific discourse in questions where certainty is not possible. The source of the Nile is yet more intractable: *uincit adhuc natura latendi*, "to this day its native power of concealment prevails" (10.271), despite the fact that this desire for knowledge, *noscendi cupido*, has afflicted the tyrants of Egypt, Persia, and Macedon. Caesar experiences the desire of Alexander the Great to reach parts that he should not. The poet is not so single-minded in his reaching after forbidden knowledge; how great is the reader's itch?

Pathos, Hyperbole, Paradox

The experience of reading Lucan is somber and unsettling. A tendency to use prosaic words, such as *gladius*, "sword" (for the more poetic *ensis*), or *cadauer*, "corpse," denies some of the traditional ornaments of epic poetry to the grim and degraded business of civil war, as does the absence of the conventional divine machinery. The relentless negativity of the poem finds expression in a recurrent trick of describing something in terms of what it is not (Bramble (1982)), for example in the description of Cato's wedding, or "anti-wedding," to his former wife Marcia, fresh from the funeral of her second husband (2.326–80), with a catalog of the accoutrements that were not used in the ritual – no garlands, no marriage couch, no saffron veil, and so on.

In other respects the *Bellum Civile* is an orgy of extravagance and excess, exaggerating features already present in Roman epic, an inherently grandiose and expansive genre. Pathos and astonishment are central goals of Virgil's epic technique, but the *Aeneid* is also an epic in which a contest between *ratio*, rationality, and the frenzied forces of unreason, *furor*, is, arguably, decided in favor of the former. There is precious little rationality in Lucan's unbalanced poem, and *furor* is given its head, matched by a sustained emotionality on the part of the narrator, who constantly interrupts his own narrative with moralizing, indignant comment, and apostrophes to his characters. We are very far from an objective epic narrator. Lucan's message is that the events of a century

before have an immediate impact on Romans living in the time of Nero, since present servitude is the lasting result of the civil war, and he seeks to involve the readers as if they were present at those events (7.207–13):

> These events . . . when the story of the war is read, will excite hope and fear together, and useless prayers, and all men will be shocked as they read what seem like fates still to come, not past, and all men will still side with you, Pompey.

With hindsight we readers do of course know the outcome at Pharsalus, but Lucan's poem can make it seem as if we do not have that knowledge. To involve his readers Lucan deploys all the armory of rhetoric as practiced in the declamation schools of the early empire; "rhetorical" used to be a stick with which to beat Lucan, as an empty, artificial, and insincere writer, but more recent criticism has shown how rhetoric serves Lucan's artistic purposes.

Lucan's hyperbole, also much criticized in the past, is a use of language that attempts to match the inexpressibly great and horrendous subject matter of the poem. Since Rome has conquered most of the inhabited world (in the ideology of empire), a Roman civil war is also a world war. The further ideological, and already Virgilian, equation of the order of the Roman state with the order of the natural world further elevates the civil war to the status of a conflict that threatens the cohesion of the universe, a repetition of the world-shaking war between the gods and giants. Unbridled *furor* leads to acts of unrestrained physical violence, in which bodies are smashed and crushed beyond recognition. The effect of one of the snakes in the Libyan desert is to produce a sepsis so swift and extreme that its victim is turned into "a gaping wound without a body" (9.769). Hyperbole can be appropriate not just to the scale of events, but to the scale of emotional reaction to events: for Lucan nothing so works on a Roman's emotions as Roman civil war.

Point and paradox, much favored by Ovid, are characteristic of much rhetoric and literature of the first century AD, and run riot in Lucan. Again expression and content are hand in glove, for civil war is a paradoxical state of affairs in which, as the first paradox of the poem puts it, "legality is conferred on crime," *iusque datum sceleri* (1.2). In the world upside-down that is the *Bellum Civile* the expected order of things fails at the political, moral, psychological, and natural levels. The inhabitants of Rome take flight – towards, not away from, war, (1.504, *in bellum fugitur*). In confounding sea and land by his military engineering Caesar rivals Xerxes who "sailed his ships into the middle of mount Athos" (by cutting a canal), *cum uela ratesque | in medium deferret Athon* (2.676–7). The dying Vulteius thanks the Roman soldier who was first to accept the invitation to strike him, by killing him in turn with a welcome stroke, *eum, cui uolnera prima | debebat, grato moriens interficit ictu* (4.546–7). Men are so tightly packed together in battle that they cannot fall when killed: "every corpse stood upright in the press" (*compressum stetit omne cadauer*, 4.787), contradicting the etymology of *cadauer* from *cado* "fall." Paradox is at home in a poem that reanimates the dying body of the Republic, and whose readers, Lucan tells them, experience the living death of political servitude.

FURTHER READING

Ahl (1976) is still in many ways the best introduction to Lucan; of older studies in English Morford (1967) retains its value. Narducci (1979) is seminal on Lucan's reversal of the Virgilian and Augustan model of Roman history. Johnson (1987) rehabilitates the humor and grotesquerie of the poem. Henderson (1998, orig. 1987) gave a decisive impetus to an appreciation of Lucan's civil-war poetics in English-language criticism. Masters (1992) is a brilliant account of Lucan's "fractured voice." Attempts to put it back together include Leigh (1997), with extensive discussion of spectacle and the gaze in Lucan; Bartsch (1997), arguing for Lucan as a politically committed ironist; D'Alessandro Behr (2007), arguing that Lucan uses apostrophe to guide the reader to correct moral judgments on the action of the poem. Sklenar (2003) ascribes to Lucan a consistently nihilist position.

Hardie (1993) discusses Lucan's place within the Roman epic tradition; Quint (1993) places the *Bellum Civile* at the beginning of a western tradition of epics of the defeated.

The problem of the Nero-proem is discussed by Grimal (1960) and Dewar (1994). Lapidge (1979) analyzes Lucan's imagery of cosmic dissolution. Dinter (2012) is a far-reaching study of the body in the *Bellum Civile*. O'Higgins (1988) examines figures of the poet within the poem. Feeney (1986) explores the play on the name of Pompey the "Great." Martindale (1976) discusses Lucan's use of paradox and hyperbole.

Tesoriero (2010) collects 17 important articles on Lucan. Asso (2011) covers aspects of Lucan and the reception of the *Bellum Civile*.

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CHAPTER 14

Petronius' *Satyrica*

Tom Murgatroyd

tanto magis expedit inguina quam ingenia fricare

(Petronius, *Satyrica* 92)

So much more profitable is it to rub groins rather than intellects.

Cast of Satyrs

The title of Petronius' novel, *Satyrica* (''Adventures of Satyrs'') prepares the reader for being transported into a world where the phallus is the main focal point. The word *Satyrica* is seductively close to the word *satyrion* – ''aphrodisiac'' (Doody (1997) 106; Rimell (2002) 176–7); yet even at times when the work is quasi-pornographic – most notably in the orgy with Quartilla, the randy priestess of Priapus – the comedy is that neither the protagonist, who imbibes ''real'' *satyrion* in large quantities (20.7) nor the reader who imbibes this work will find much prurient pleasure therein.

The first-person narrator who recollects his low-life adventures is endowed with a suitably phallic name, Encolpius (Greek for ''In-crotch''): ''We could see the narrator simply as a phallos, embodied as a penis, made into agent'' (Richlin (1992) 220; see Jensson (2004) 240 on the literary ancestry of Encolpius as ''phallic clown''). The satyr-like companions of Encolpius, who also become rivals for the attentions of Giton (''Neighbor,'' ''Matey''), include Ascyltos (''not tired'' – or, as Morales (2008) 45 translates, ''Un-shagged-out'') and the poet Eumolpus, whose name (''Singing nicely'') contrasts ironically with his mediocre poetic creations.

The extant ancient Greek novels look like models of sexual decorum and generic restraint in comparison (cf. Goldhill (2008) 194). These novels work towards the union of a heterosexual couple which has been hampered by a series of setbacks. Whilst the couple's fidelity is tested to the full, their mutual love for one another survives all

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trials. Not that the extant Greek novels present all their main characters as deserving medals for maintaining their chastity: in Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe* the novice Daphnis accepts sexual tutoring from the experienced Lycaina, and in Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon* the eponymous hero yields to Melite's advances, but in both cases the male hero is acting with the interests of his true love in mind: Lycaina's training session will ultimately allow Daphnis and Chloe to go beyond their previously unsatisfactory attempts at love-making, whilst Clitophon views his action as a means of "curing" Melite of her love for him, rather than the start of an affair which will be an obstacle between himself and his beloved Leucippe.

There is no such mutual love and fidelity in the *Satyrica*, and no apparent blissful union to look forward to – just a series of erotic mishaps. Encolpius is continually baffled both by the chronic infidelity of his boyfriend Giton and by his chronic impotence. As a result, this supposedly "aphrodisiac" text ironically reads as a litany of anticlimax and sexual embarrassment. (For *Satyrica* as parody of erotic novel, see Slater (1990) 143.)

Petronius and the Picaresque Novel

The *Satyrica* doesn't just veer sharply away from the conventions of the extant Greek novels in its cast of phallic characters and homosexual relationships; on a stylistic level, also, its protean shift between different genres and registers comes across as a "radically anti-classical experiment" (Rimell (2007) 62). It is as if the narrator is feasting on almost every available literary genre – epic, mime, romantic novels, comedy, love elegy, oratory – and then gleefully spewing it all back up again in half-digested gobbets. The use of "prosimetric form" – the mixture of verse and prose which Petronius has perhaps adopted from Menippean satire – facilitates this disorientating shift between modes of literary representation (see Rimell (2005) 164–8). We can move, for example, from the "high" style of epic, such as Eumolpus' *Bellum Civile*, with its divine apparatus and idealized presentation of Caesar, all the way down to the gritty realism of the freedman Dama's speech at Trimalchio's dinner, which not only gives us a representation of sub-literary "vulgar" Latin, but also mimics his "besotted incoherence" (41.10–12, with Boyce (1991) 76; Rimell (2009) 67).The modern reader is probably better prepared for Petronius' wild generic shifts than his Neronian readership would have been. From a modern perspective, the *Satyrica* stands as the founding text in the vibrant tradition of "picaresque" novels – from *Don Quixote* to *Ulysses* – which prides itself in this generic interplay (see Harrison (2009)). In *Don Quixote*, priest Doctor Pero Perez seems to become a spokesman for Cervantes as he outlines the advantages of a loosely structured picaresque work, as Walsh (1970: 32) recognizes:

> [The] loose plan of these books gives the author an opportunity of showing his talent for the epic, the lyric, the tragic and the comic, and all the qualities contained in the most sweet and pleasing sciences of poetry and rhetoric; for the epic may be written in prose as well as in verse.

Not only are we primed for multi-generic fiction, but we are also ready for the anti-hero of the *Satyrica*, Encolpius, who is to us a recognizable character type: the

picaresque protagonist who moves aimlessly through a contemporary reality which he cannot comprehend and which pays him back the compliment by not comprehending him (see Walsh (1970) 234–5). One of the most memorable denizens of that reality is the fabulously rich freedman Trimalchio, whose dinner party is so culturally disorientating for Encolpius that he gets a mounting feeling that he is trapped in a labyrinth. The figure of Trimalchio has himself had an impact on modern fiction, an important (and at first sight surprising) instance being *The Great Gatsby*, which F. Scott Fitzgerald had considered entitling *Trimalchio in West Egg*. Whilst Gatsby is very different from the boorish host Trimalchio in his withdrawn approach to his parties, both of them inhabit a world of *nouveau riche* materialism about which the respective narrators are uncomfortable (see Tanner (1990) vii–viii).

Yet after we have bolstered ourselves with the thought that we are familiar with the novelistic tradition which Petronius helped to spawn, we have to confront the grim realities of transmission which have made the text itself seem as dysfunctional as its protagonist Encolpius. Even the most basic observations about the nature and meaning of the text are built on the mixture of conjecture and hypothesis which inevitably stem from not possessing a complete text. Out of a huge work which originally ran to 16 books, perhaps making it as long as Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones*, all that has come down to us are book 15 and excerpts from books 14 and 16 (see Rose (1971) 2–3).

It is best to begin by admitting our profound ignorance, and to realize that the particular ways that critics choose to fill in the gaps in their knowledge are inevitably driven by their own hypothetical assumptions (Conte (1994) 454). I am going to outline three interlinked ways in which we "make sense" of this fragmentary novel: reconstruction, plot structure, and authorial voice.

Filling in the Gaps

Reconstruction

An obvious first step in "filling in the gaps" is to reconstruct the novel using ancient testimonia and reminiscences within the text of events which must have occurred in the lost books. For example, two ancient sources imply that some lost episodes of the *Satyrica* took place in Massilia: Sidonius (fr. 5 M. = Sidonius Apollinaris *C.* 23.145–57) calls Petronius a "cultivator of the sacred trunk in the gardens of Massilia, equal to Priapus of the Hellespont," whilst Servius (at *Aeneid* 3.57) outlines a "scapegoat" ritual carried out at Massilia whereby a poor man was driven out by the town after being fed for a year at public expense. These sources can be used to build the "starting point" which we crave: Encolpius starts out in Massilia, and his adventures begin when is driven out of that town as a scapegoat to appease Priapus (see, e.g., Connors (1998) 29; Jensson (2004) 108–9).

Yet the way we choose to reconstruct the novel necessarily reflects our own theoretical agendas. The most large-scale recent example (Jensson (2004) 87–135; 174–87, 279–301) is driven by a strong desire to establish the *Satyrica* firmly as a novel in the Greek tradition; indeed, Jensson makes the bold proposal that the novel is a palimpsest of a Greek original, which had the same title. Those in the "Greek novel" camp can

with justification brandish the title of the work itself, as the Greek neuter plural ending (*Satyri-ka*) is a conventional way of forming a novel title, perhaps going back to Aristides' salacious comic stories in the *Milesiaka* (Milesian Tales) from the second century BC (see Walsh (1995) 10–12; Jensson (2004) 255–71). They can also use the scant but significant fragments of Greek comic fiction, particularly the *Iolaus* fragment, as evidence for the idea that the *Satyrica* was tapping into an existing world of comic novels, with their heady mixture of criminality, communal sex, and cross-dressing (Stephens and Winkler (1995) 358–74).

For Jensson, reconstruction allows the underlying coherence and generic affiliations of Petronius to be revealed, but some might argue that the derivative nature of Petronius is based on dubious chronology. If we assume (in line with the modern *communis opinio*) that Petronius is to be identified with the Petronius at Tacitus *Annals* 16.17 who acts as Nero's "Arbiter of Elegance," then both the *Iolaos* fragment and all the extant novels apart from Callirhoe (which is possibly mentioned by Persius in *Satire* 1.134) would have post-dated Petronius' novel.

On the opposite extreme to Jensson, Zeitlin (1971) 634 believes that the *Satyrica* eludes any attempt to be pinned down generically:

> It has affinities with epic, with the *Reiseroman*, with romance, with formal satire (both Lucilian and Menippean), with the Milesian tale, and with the mime, among others. It may use or abuse elements from all these genres, but it has metamorphosed this blend of genres into something singular, a "unique hybrid," as it has been called.

Zeitlin does at times appear to be letting the fragmentary nature of the text dictate an equally fragmented reading of Petronius' novel, unjustifiably making Petronius into something "unique," when it is arguably tricks of transmission (and maybe a blindness among Latinists to the complexities of the Greek novels) that have made the Greek and Roman novelistic traditions seem like two distinct categories. (On the closeness of the Latin and Greek traditions, see Reardon (2006) 232; on the similarities between Achilles Tatius' Clitophon and Encolpius, see Morgan (2007) 105–20.) Yet whilst the move to align the *Satyrica* with the Greek novel is attractive, there might be a danger of doing Petronius a disservice in terms of his originality and his contribution to the genre of the comic novel.

Plot structure

Closely linked to the drive to "fill in the gaps," critics as far back as Klebs (1889) have wished to validate the *Satyrica*'s status as novel by seeking for an underlying plot thread. He put forward the attractive idea that Encolpius in the *Satyrica* is a victim of the "wrath of Priapus," who takes revenge on an interruption of his rites by Encolpius in a parodic re-run of the wrath of Poseidon in the *Odyssey* (see too Connors (1998) 26–7; Sullivan (1968) 92–3; Harrison (2009) 229). Encolpius himself mentions the "Priapus' wrath" as he attempts to elevate himself to the plane of the many heroes – Hercules, Laomedon, Pelias, Ulysses (139) – who have been pursued by an angry deity: "The oppressive anger of Priapus from the Hellespont is pursuing me also over the land, over the sea of hoary Nereus" (*me quoque per terras, per cani Nereos aequor / Hellespontiaci sequitur gravis ira Priapi*, 139).

Some have even used the Servian "scapegoat" theme mentioned above to speculate that the novel began in an Iliadic manner, with a plague in Massilia caused by the wrath of Priapus corresponding to the plague sent by Apollo in *Iliad* 1 (Sullivan (1968) 40–42; Connors (1998) 29). Whilst this latter point is highly speculative, the overall idea that Priapus is the deity who lurks threateningly behind the action of the plot seems plausible, even if that threat is to some extent a phantom generated by Encolpius' own fertile literary imagination. Encolpius has certainly been guilty of interrupting Quartilla as she performed the rites of Priapus and looking on "what was forbidden" (*quod non licuit*, 17). As punishment for the sacrilege he has to engage in her exhausting and demeaning sexual orgies (18–26). Later, Lichas, the ship's captain whose wife had been seduced by Encolpius in a lost episode, says that Priapus has informed him in a dream that his quarry is on board the ship (104). Towards the end of our extant text, Encolpius is cured of his dysfunction, though it is impossible to tell whether this is a permanent or temporary solution to his problem.

Authorial voice and narrator

Filling in the gaps by reconstruction or "finding the plot thread" may be controversial, but they seem far less contentious than the issue of what the *Satyrica* means, if indeed it means anything. Two classic works of Petronian scholarship, Zeitlin (1971) and Conte (1996), give radically divergent opinions about where the author stands with regard to the fictional world that he has created:

> If Petronius sees the world as irrational, confused and illusory, this *Weltanschauung* should be accepted as his legitimate right. (Zeitlin (1971) 633)

> [Petronius'] act of hiding, his oblique and ironic discourse, has a polemical ring in relation to the theatricality of Neronian culture, in which literature becomes exhibition . . . Behind this position of Petronius there is an aristocratic, even conservative, attitude. (Conte (1996) 69–70)

The discord is generated by the fact that the holy grail of Petronian interpretation, the "author's standpoint," is extremely elusive, if not impossible to deduce (Beck (1982) 206). The idea of the "author" appears to be little more than a mannequin which we can dress up with our own preferred perspective on the text (Rimell (2005) 164).

Nor will any amount of historical research allow us to resurrect the true Petronius. Scholars are still tempted to use Tacitus' Petronius for aid in reading the *Satyrica* (Richlin (1992) 218; Hope (2009) 160), but it will not do to take Tacitus' scathing remarks about Petronius' debauched lifestyle and his light-hearted approach to committing suicide (*Annals* 16.18–19) as a sign that his work was necessarily immoral or subversive, for Tacitus himself could have fallen into the trap of reading the sordid deeds of the *Satyrica* as a semi-autobiographical reflection of Petronius' own lifestyle.

An authorial figure would be a welcome interpretative prop, explaining where *we* as readers fit into the narrative. It would show us in what way "lascivious adventures" (*Satyrica*) are to be read as *satura* (satire). Is Petronius the fairly straight satirist that Conte proposes, with Roman aristocrats looking down on his narrator Encolpius and lamenting the literary and moral decline of Rome? Or is it precisely the snobbishness

of those who pretend to lament the decline in contemporary literature who are being sent up by the author, thus making him a satirist in the Menippean tradition, as Relihan (1993) 96 argues? Or should we see the Greek setting of the text (in the Greek cities around the Bay of Naples, and latterly in the Greek city of Croton) and the putative Greek ethnicity of the narrator as a sign that the text is offering a release "from the financial, social and moral obligations of being Roman" (Slater (1990) 48), so that the Roman reader can enjoy the literary equivalent of a seedy seaside holiday at Baiae?

My own standpoint tends to overlap with Relihan, but I believe that readers and critics owe it to this text not to feel cocksure about our own opinions, which cannot be anything apart from provisional. I shall now attempt to show how the *Satyrica* itself encourages discourse on the issues of stable interpretation, literary judgment, and authority which have proved so contentious with its readers. As I discuss the themes of voyeurism, abuse of epic, and education, I argue that in laughing at Encolpius' comic mishaps we are always in danger of laughing at ourselves: even when we try to make out that we are "outside" the text, looking in as objective observers, our act of watching implicates us in the action.

Through the Peep holes

The inset narrative of *Odyssey* 9–12, where Odysseus relates his adventures to the Phaeacians, is the prototype of Encolpius' unreliable narration, just as the wrath of Poseidon is the prototype of the wrath of Priapus. Odysseus' first-person narrative has the benefit of an objective frame which makes it clear that elements such as the Cyclops and the wrath of Poseidon are more than his own fantasies (e.g., *Odyssey* 1.68–9). Encolpius is an heir to this tradition, but he is more unreliable than Odysseus, since none of what he relates can be checked.

Nevertheless, however much we may distrust him, we cannot but be dependent on him: it is on his own (fallible) memory that we rely upon, and through his eyes that we are being invited to view the world. The charm and the challenge of the text is that whenever we start "looking down" on Encolpius' actions, we are continually being set up (and sent up) as voyeurs who hypocritically think we can judge and peek in at the same time. The reader, as Richlin (1992) 218 suggests, "is the ultimate voyeur." As we look in through the chink in the door, the text seems to expect us to act out a gesture of disapproval, like the philosophers who wished to be seen with a sad expression amidst the entertainments in Nero's court (*Annals* 14.16); but disdain is conquered by curiosity, and we continue looking in.

The readers of the *Satyrica* are bound to feel uncomfortable as they watch a character gazing on a sordid sexual act through a peep-hole in the wall and becoming inflamed with lust, particularly when the sexual act in question is the deflowering of Pannychis ("Miss All Night Long"), a girl who "appeared not to be older than seven years old," by Giton in a mock marriage ceremony. Encolpius is originally "dumbstruck" (*obstipui*) at this and protests against the ceremony (25.3). Soon, though, his scruples are dropped and he ends up joining the amorous priestess Quartilla at the peep-hole:

> And Quartilla, above all, had put her inquisitive eye to a peep-hole which she had shamelessly opened up and was watching their childish play with lustful attentiveness. With a firm tug of her hand she pulled me over too to look at the same spectacle. (*Satyrica*, 26)

The pattern of the audience watching a character who is himself watching a distasteful sex scene repeats itself later on when our band of satyrs are in the town of Croton. When Eumolpus is introducing a girl to the "rites of Aphrodite" (*Aphrodisiaca sacra*), her brother watches through the keyhole (140). Encolpius tries to use the opportunity to seduce the boy, but fails because of his usual impotence.

It is notable that in the former example Encolpius registers initial disapproval of what Quartilla does – the chink in the wall has been "shamelessly made" (*improbe diductam*) – yet promptly joins her. In the world of the *Satyrica*, anyone who makes a display of *severitas* (moralizing primness) is soon going to be denounced as a hypocrite, and that goes not just for its characters but for the audience of the work, who may protest all they wish but are still caught playing the voyeur.

Encolpius has a stockpile of ammunition ready to deploy against stern readers who have the temerity to think that they can look at the text from a lofty moral or literary viewpoint. This is most notable when he attacks critics, termed "Catos" after that Roman's famously strict moral standards (Connors (1998) 73), who see degeneracy in a work whose only fault is to report back honestly what people actually do:

> quid me constricta spectatis fronte Catones
> damnatisque novae simplicitatis opus?
> sermonis puri non tristis gratia ridet
> quodque facit populus, candida lingua refert.
> (132.15)

> Why do you look at me, you Catos, with a frown,
> and condemn a work of newfound candor?
> The elegance of its pure style laughs without severity
> and a frank tongue relates what people do.

Although Encolpius' mention of *opus* here encourages us to think that he is referring his narrative as a whole, it is best not to follow Relihan (1993) 93 in believing that "here alone in the text as we have it" the authorial and the narratorial voices merge into one. It is best not to elevate this or anything else to the status of authorial opinion, however forthright it may appear (see Zeitlin (1971) 676; Beck (1973) 51; Rimell (2005) 163).

Encolpius contrasts the forced scowl of the stern moralists watching the action with the smile (*ridet*) which the charming "work" beams back at them. His narrative pulls off a paradoxical feat of staying "pure" (*purum*) or "refined" even in the process of talking about sex – a far more impressive feat than Catullus' claim to keep "chaste" (*castum*) whilst producing prurient poetry to get stiff loins moving (Catullus 16). We can – and perhaps should – scowl disapprovingly at the absurdity of Encolpius' claims that he has made a stylistic breakthrough of making sexy stories "clean" as well as fun. But we ought at least give his audacious assault on literary hierarchies a hearing: he is saying that automatically attributing his narrative to the "low" style on the basis of its sexual content is unfair. What they find offensive are precisely its finest qualities: unlike them, it does not strike up a posture of severity in the face of things which everyone (even the "Catos") engage in: *nam quis concubitus, Veneris quis gaudia nescit? / quis vetat in tepido membra calere toro?* ("Who doesn't know about intercourse, who doesn't know the joy of sex? Who forbids their limbs from getting hot on a warm couch?" 132.15.)

Of course, Encolpius' protests do rebound against him, since at least in his current state he is a prime example of someone who does not "know sexual enjoyment" (Relihan (1993) 93) , and indeed "enjoyment" can rarely be associated with intercourse in the *Satyrica* (Rimell (2005) 163). Nevertheless, the reader cannot just laugh off this overblown defense of sexual frankness. When Encolpius follows this up by saying that "Among humans, there is nothing more false than stupid prejudice (*persuasio*), and nothing more stupid than insincere prudishness" (132.16), he is pre-empting a predictable response by his Neronian audience both to the content and the style of his *opus*. Encolpius' response to those trying to elevate his adventures of sexual dysfunction to a literary plane is to claim that the problem is not his frankness but the stupid and hypocritical prejudices of the critics. Those same critics are looking through the peep-hole with everyone else; however appalled they might be, they still keep watching.

Looking down on Trimalchio

When Trimalchio's slave comes to remind Encolpius and his companions that they are having dinner with his master that evening (26), both Encolpius and the reader breathe a sigh of relief: this will spare them from the next installment in the ongoing saga of Quartilla's orgiastic "dinners" which have left them wounded (26). Only the priapic pastry which spurts out saffron when touched by the guests (60) reminds us, rather benignly, of the god's lingering sexual threat (Connors (1998) 30).

Nevertheless, Trimalchio's dinner does not bring the relief that Encolpius and his companions were hoping for, as they have just swapped one ordeal with another. As the dinner progresses, we realize that Encolpius is trapped in a deceptive labyrinth of a dinner orchestrated by Daedalus, Trimalchio's aptly named cook (Panayotakis (1995) 103). They have been invited there as *scholastici* ("schoolmen") not because Trimalchio particularly respects their type of learning or even wants to have educated conversation with them, but because it projects a superficial aura of refinement, in the same way as possessing two libraries (one Greek, one Latin, 48) gives a sense of respectability: the advantage of both books and scholars is that you can buy them in and establish yourself as a literary patron without having any obligation to read or consult them.

In a variation on the voyeurism scenes which I discussed above, the narrator is for most of the meal reduced to the status of passive onlooker, viewing an entertainment to which he doesn't know exactly how to react. In the same way as he disapproves of the sordid "marriage" between Pannychis and Giton, yet also lets himself be dragged into watching it, Encolpius at the dinner veers between joining in with the conviviality of the group and striking up a supercilious air of scorn. He not infrequently joins his fellow guests in praising Trimalchio's *lautitiae* and *elegantia* (luxury and refinement), in a manner that does not appear to be ironic (cf., e.g., Smith (1975) 59 at 29.3 and Slater (1990) 64). At other times, however, he expresses exasperation with the way Trimalchio controls proceedings like a "tyrant" (41.9) and the "unprecedented manner" in which the slaves start anointing the guests' feet with perfume. Encolpius apologizes to his reader for recording this latter detail: "I'm ashamed of recounting what followed" (70).

He has earlier been sickened by the awful rendition of a single line of Virgil (*Aeneid* 5.1) by Habinnas' slave (68): Encolpius says of his performance that "then, for the

first time ever, even Virgil offended me'' (*tunc primum me etiam Vergilius offenderit*). Not only is the line severed from its context and delivered with poor voice control (''barbarous meandering''), but it is interspersed with coarse verses from Atellan farce, which shows no ''understanding, respect or appreciation'' for Virgil (Panayotakis (1995) 100).

Even without the prompting of the narrator, the educated readers doubtless derisively chortle as Trimalchio tries to explain a performance by ''Homeric players'' (*Homeristae*) with a hopelessly garbled summary of the Trojan War, which is in his version a war fought between the Trojans and *Tarentines*, prompted by the abduction of Helen, the sister of Diomedes and Ganymede, by Agamemnon, who then sacrifices a hind in Helen's place as an offering to Diana (59). He likewise mistakenly thinks that a bowl illustrating the scene of Daedalus putting Pasiphae into his cow contraption to allow her to mate with a bull is ''Daedalus putting Niobe in the Trojan horse'' (52).

Yet at the very moment Encolpius or the other *scholastici* start scoffing at their host's poor taste and ignorance of literature, they find themselves condemned for that same *ficta severitas* (insincere primness) for which Encolpius will later attack the moralizers. As Smith (1975) 139 suggests, it is ironic that Encolpius is as offended by the incident of the perfume (70) as he is at his ''much more alarming misadventures'' during Quartilla's orgy; he is hardly in a position to make these judgments. On the issue of ignorance, his education might spare him Trimalchio's howlers, but he is himself remarkably naive or slow on the uptake when confronted with representations of myth. It seems remarkable that he has to ask Trimalchio's janitor about the subjects of the paintings on the wall of the colonnade, given that two of the subjects are ''the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*'' (29.9).

Nor is Encolpius' general grasp of artistic representation more advanced than his host's. Trimalchio might look unsophisticated for his belief that the aim of art is to be lifelike, even – absurdly – when it is representing dead people (52), but the fact that Encolpius is given a shock the moment he enters Trimalchio's house by mistaking a painting of a dog for a real dog (29) seems to vindicate Trimalchio: realistic art surprises, shocks, and reverses expectations in a way that can generate laughter, but also gives the artist disturbing power over the naive observer such as Encolpius, whose ''supercilious perspective'' (Whitmarsh (2008) 80) is undermined as he is duped out again and again by Daedalus' deceptive cooking.

The scorn of the *scholastici* is also countered directly by some of the freedmen. Throughout the meal they air their (justified) suspicions that they are being sniggered at by the learned guests for their uneducated manner of speaking. Part of the way through his speech Echion the clothes dealer (*centonarius*; possibly ''fire-fighter'') turns to Agamemnon, the teacher of rhetoric, and says ''You seem to me . . . to be saying 'What is that annoying man prattling on about?' That's because you, who can speak, don't speak – so you mock the words of the poor blighters'' (45). Later, Ascyltos' raucous laughter at Trimalchio's endless succession of gifts with punning titles is interpreted by Hermeros as impolite scoffing at his host:

> Why are you laughing, you bleating sheep? Does my master's refinement not agree with you? You're a notch above us, I see, and used to dining in higher society . . . A fine specimen you are, to laugh at others; some sort of runaway, going around at night, who isn't worth his own piss. (57)

Although a Roman aristocratic reader might wish to join Giton as he tries to restrain his laughter at the freedman's indignant outburst, Hermeros' overall point that Ascyltos is in no position to laugh at someone who, unlike him, has had to work his way to freedom and respectability is one that can't be brushed off just by sniggering (57.10–11). We might regard his scathing view of fancy elite education, with its "geometry, criticism and illogical trivialities" (58.7), as unfair. When Encolpius plans to part with Ascyltos and divide up their belongings, he implies that their education will allow them to make ends meet. Nevertheless, Hermeros' pride in the practical, purposive nature of his own learning – capital letters and working out percentages – does have weight behind it: their ongoing education in the corrupt schools of declamation appears to be singularly lacking in purpose or direction, and their income is coming not from honest toil but from theft (12–15).

Where does the reader fit in at this dinner party? I hope to have shown that the idea that "we look down on Encolpius looking down on Trimalchio" is far too simplistic. The *Cena* is an instance where Encolpius often becomes a voyeur rather than a participant, taking in the spectacle as if he is an outsider. I would argue that the text almost always makes hypocrites of those who want to position themselves on the outside. As an observer of the *Cena*, Encolpius demonstrates for us precisely what the moralizing audience of his own worst nightmare is like: that person who joins in the hilarity with everyone else at one moment, but derides it at the next. If we can't stomach having Virgil mixed up with coarse farces during Trimalchio's dinner, we are hardly going to be able to face the similar generic mix whereby, for example, a suitable atmosphere is prepared for Eumolpus' "high" epic poem with a farting routine from the overloaded slave Corax, reminiscent of similar routines in Aristophanic comedy.

Making Virgil Blush

The moment when Encolpius bemoans the "Catos" is precisely the time when Encolpius seems to be doing his level best to turn his readers into Catos. At Croton he has become the lover of the beautiful Circe, and he has appropriately styled himself "Polyaenus" ("much praised," or perhaps "with many stories"), an epithet of Odysseus (*Iliad* 9.763). Predictably enough, his equipment fails him, and shortly afterwards the narrator launches a tirade against his own phallus, which shows no reaction but remains limp:

> She kept her eyes fixed on the ground,
> and was no more roused by the speech I had started on
> than the pliant willow or poppy's stalk.

It seems ironic that the narrator who has claimed to be a champion of Virgil has just taken two of the most poignant moments in the *Aeneid*, Aeneas' vain attempt for reconciliation with the ghost of Dido in the Underworld (*Aeneid* 6.469–10) and the death of Euryalus (*Aeneid* 9.436) and made a travesty of them by applying them to his own flaccid penis. From one perspective, Encolpius seems guilty of gross insensitivity and presumptuous in his use of Virgil: "Any feeling of compassion or pity which readers may feel towards 'Polyaenus' vanishes at the sound of this literary appropriation" (Panayotakis (2009) 58). Travesty of Virgil almost seems designed to elicit the "inner Cato" in classicists, who put

on the frown of *severitas* and leap to defend Virgil from priapic abuse. As we saw above, coarse treatment of Virgil elicited a similar reaction from our own Encolpius at the *Cena*.

From a subversive perspective, though – a perspective which might be more appropriate in the lascivious world of satyrs – there is humor at seeing the supposedly squeaky-clean *Aeneid* being forced to submit to priapic torture. By laying violent hands on Virgil and forcing him to become a priapic poem, Encolpius is starting down the road of sexual travesty which will ultimately burgeon into Ausonius' full-scale and sexually explicit *Cento Nuptialis*, formed from the ingenious weaving together of Virgilian half lines. Ausonius precedes the *Imminutio* ("Deflowering") by saying that he is "making even Virgil shameless," and he succeeds his endeavor: the *Cento* makes Virgil tell, in his own words, precisely the kind of story which his epic has, in its modesty, kept as hushed up as possible (see Ziolkowski and Putnam (2008) 472–5).

Indeed, if we can stifle our scorn it might be possible to see the propriety of the Dido-penis parallelism for Encolpius, and even summon up some "compassion" for him. Dido in the Underworld is an insubstantial shade, and it is clear that Encolpius sees impotence as a kind of death. For someone with the name "In-groin," the lack of functioning member is bound to cause a crisis of confidence and identity. It is notable that his old acquaintance Lichas, wanting to verify the identity of the shaven-headed Encolpius, examines not his face but his phallus, which he addresses "Hello, Encolpius" (*salve . . . Encolpi*) and gives a handshake to (105). This humorous parody of the nurse recognizing Odysseus by the scar on his thigh (*Odyssey* 19.393ff.) shows that his penis is the key to the definition of what he is. But the epic intertexts also raise Encolpius' dysfunction to a heroic plane, however much the reader might protest: he has indeed lost part of himself, and trying to revivify his member seems as futile as Aeneas' trying to reach out to the implacable Dido.

Following his outburst of anger (132.12), Encolpius feels a brief period of embarrassment at having conversed with his penis, partly because he has in the back of his mind those men "of the more prudish type" (*severioris notae*) who tend not even to acknowledge that body part. He then wonders if he has done anything wrong; isn't it normal for people, in life and in literature, to address a whole range of other parts of their anatomy, from their stomachs to their heads? Even high literature does this: "Doesn't Ulysses also have a dispute with his heart, and some tragic characters rebuke their eyes as if they could hear?" (*non et Ulixes cum corde litigat suo, et quidam tragici oculos suos tamquam audientes castigant*? 132). This arbitrary exclusion of penises from the list of body parts to which a hero can acceptably talk is yet another instance of undue severity in literature. Encolpius' violence towards Virgil is his way of correcting that severity. He is fighting to establish his plight as an appropriate theme for an epic struggle, and though he is unlikely to persuade us of this, because it would involve abandoning our cherished notions of what is appropriate in a "high" style, it is an *Odyssey* intertext itself that encourages Encolpius to think in this way.

The earliest reference to impotence in a Greek literary work is the *Odyssey*, where Hermes famously warns Odysseus that Circe will make him "impotent and unmanly" (10.301), and gives him the mysterious herbal antidote *moly* (10.305: see McMahon (1998) 23). This attempt by Homer to be sensitive and discreet about the hero's potential sexual embarrassment is as good as an invitation for a parodic treatment which shows that this is all about Odysseus' penis: *Priapeia* 68.21–22 states that *moly* is nothing

other than the hero's *mentula* ("prick": see the very useful note of Conte (1996) 98 n. 27). As it is only Hermes' timely intervention that saves Odysseus from being rendered impotent by Circe, the reader can imagine a very different twist to this epic where Odysseus was not so lucky. That would give us an Odysseus more like Encolpius, that unfortunate character who ends up impotent just when he wants to perform. Encolpius makes the link clear by styling himself "Polyaenus" at Croton, just like Odysseus, and recounting his limpness when he tries to have sex with his beloved "Circe" (128).

Even though the aid of Hermes-Mercury is conspicuously lacking in Encolpius' encounter with Circe, divine help is eventually forthcoming. Although his degrading program of treatment by the alcohol-fuelled witch Oenothea ("Wine goddess") and the hag Proselenus seems to leave him as flaccid as ever (134–9), not long afterwards Encolpius is proudly showing off his erection to Eumolpus, who reacts first of all with horror (*primo exhorruit*); this may simply be an indication of its unbelievably impressive proportions, but it also suggests the fear associated with seeing a ghost. After his initial shock, Eumolpus is able to vouch for the corporeality of what he is seeing, as he "handles the generosity of the gods with both hands" (140.13). And given that Hermes is the source of the herbal remedy in *Odyssey* 10, it is appropriate that Encolpius gives thanks not to Priapus but to Mercury for his cure (140: see Conte (1996) 97–9 for Mercury's phallic associations). Encolpius' gratitude to this god is also appropriate given that Encolpius views impotence as parallel to death, and one of Mercury's functions is to lead souls to and from the Underworld (140.12). He therefore boasts that he is "more favored than Protesilaus or than any other figure from olden times" (140.13): Protesilaus was only granted a temporary return to the upper world to be with his wife Laodamia, whereas Encolpius optimistically believes that the restoration of his phallus to life is more long-lasting than this.

Bakhtin (1981: 40) suggests that the use of epic in the novel was a twofold process: it brings down epic to the level of contemporary reality, but can also "raise reality into a new and heroic sphere." Conte's influential *Hidden Author* bars the latter avenue of interpretation, seeing Encolpius as a "mythomaniac or romanticizing narrator" whose identifications with heroes are "delirious" (Conte (1996) 35 and 97). According to Conte, such use of myth only serves to bring out Encolpius own adequacies through contrast with the mythical ideals to which he compares himself. This is an attractive reading of the text which aligns Encolpius with the likes of Don Quixote, who interprets his bungled adventures through the distorting lens of the chivalric literature. But even if Don Quixote is to blame for not being able to see the dividing line between heroic literature and his own reality, part of the problem lies with the chivalric romances themselves: the possibilities for heroism which they offer are of little value in the contemporary world.

Audience Responses

In the previous section we saw how Encolpius brings Homer and Virgil low, forcing them to dance to a priapic tune. A similar deflation of high literature can be seen in the way that audiences within the *Satyrica* react to Eumolpus' pretentious poetic creations. His tragic *Troiae Halosis*, "Fall of Troy," recited in response to a painting in a temple, is given the following reception by the bystanders: "Some of the people who were walking

around in the colonnades threw stones at Eumolpus as he recited. But he, recognizing this applause for his genius, covered his head and fled out of the temple.'' (90)

Eumolpus can almost guarantee himself this reception whenever he recites poetry in a public space. Yet rather than learning the lesson of avoiding public performance, the poet seeks it out at every opportunity, viewing the violent reaction as a confirmation of his genius (*plausus ingenii*). The attacks, both parodic and physical, are sure signs that he is a good poet – someone who does *not* pander to public tastes. He later almost gets ''flogged'' and ejected from the baths for attempting a similar recital. A group of boys then jeer at him as if he is crazy and impudently mimic his poem (92).

Eumolpus contrasts the poor reception that his poetry gets at the baths with the treatment of Ascyltos. When his clothes are stolen, he is given many enthusiastic offers of help on account of his prodigious penis. The moral of the story, in Eumolpus' opinion, is that it is ''so much more profitable to rub groins rather than geniuses'' (*tanto maius est inguina quam ingenia fricare*, 92). On one level, his joke is amusing because the semantic chasm between *inguina* and *ingenia* is combined with close phonological similarity. On another level, however, the phonological similarity of *inguina* and *ingenia* and their zeugma with the verb *fricare*, which has the sexual connotation ''to masturbate,'' suggest that the two terms are in danger of merging into one another: ''brains and groins . . . are pretty much the same thing after all'' (Rimell (2002) 120). We have already seen just how shocking the breakdown of this brain/groin distinction can be, as the *ingenium* of Virgil was forced to represent the *inguen* of Encolpius.

Whereas Eumolpus consistently gains a hostile audience reaction when he is trying to peddle ''chaste'' poems, he appears much more successful as a salacious raconteur. When, on a ship captained by Encolpius' old foe Lichas, Eumolpus gives up on his poetry, and turns his hand instead to a salacious ''Milesian tale'' in prose about the grieving widow of Ephesus who ends up having sex with a soldier in her dead husband's tomb, his storytelling wins the attention and approval of most of his internal audience (110, 113). It is significant that Eumolpus gets this reaction from a story where he does not bother about ''old tragedies or the names known down the generations'' (*nec se curare tragoedias veteres curare aut nomina saeculis nota*). Far from going back to the world of myth for his exempla, this comes from his own memory (*sua memoria*). Of course, the gap in the reactions to his respective public performances might simply show that he is a failure as a poet, rather than implying that there is no market for high-brow poetry. Still, it would be tempting to see the sailors' positive reaction to Eumolpus' Milesian tale as a hopeful hint at the type of reaction an audience free from prudishness might adopt towards the ''Milesian'' narrative of the *Satyrica* as a whole. Neither Eumolpus' Milesian tale nor the *Satyrica* allow themselves to be shackled by slavish adherence to myths and the epic tradition; even if Eumolpus' poetic output is mediocre, it is made to look even more staid and stagnant through the negative reaction his performances gain. Eumolpus' tragic and epic poetic creations are the literary equivalent of the prudes (*severi*) whom Encolpius ranted against. In his *Ars poetica* at 118 Eumolpus pompously claims that poetry should shun the language of the ordinary people, citing Horace (*Ode* 3.1.1) as his authority: ''I hate the common mob and I keep them at a distance'' (*odi profanum vulgus et arceo*). But his lecherous and pederastic behavior is inconsistent with his snobbish hatred of vulgarity: his ''sublime'' is a myth peddled by a hypocrite who is using it to hide his own immoralities. (Critics have long seen in Petronius parody

of Seneca's pompous moralizing, particularly in his *Letters to Lucilius*: see, e.g., Walsh (1970) 84; Relihan (1993) 97; Sullivan (2006) 314–15.)

In the final section I show that those who come on the scene preaching the way to literary and moral salvation are, ironically, the most corrupt characters of the lot. They give "education" such a bad name that the pride expressed by Trimalchio in having been successful "without having heard a philosopher lecture" (*nec umquam philosophum audivit*, 71.12), seems laudable.

Eumolpus and Educational Guidance

Does the *Satyrica* offer a way of disentangling brains from groins, so that we can strive to rise above sordid material pleasure, replacing it with what Eumolpus elsewhere calls "love of the intellect" (*amor ingenii*, 83)? Given that Encolpius is a *scholasticus*, we should naturally expect that this aspiration is at least in the back of his mind. Yet he seems ill-equipped to move from carnal love to love of the intellect on his own: what he desperately needs is a guide who can show him the path to these mysteries. (On the importance of the theme of initiation for the hero of Greco-Roman novels, see Alvares (2006).)

When Eumolpus first appears on the scene in the *Satyrica*, it is at precisely the point when Encolpius most needs such a mentor, for Giton's choice to leave him and become Ascyltos' boyfriend has left him desolate (80) and directionless. Even though he follows the respectable precedent of the hero Achilles by going to the shore and lamenting (81), this does not solve the problem. Shortly afterwards he adopts an alternative strategy to dealing with love by going to the art gallery, where he drops his epic role-model and instead imitates a *topos* familiar from Greek novels, where a lover looks at paintings depicting the amatory affairs of the gods and links them to his own erotic plight. The description of Eumolpus' entrance (83.7) hints that he is "a saviour who will rescue the love-lorn Encolpius with some advice from an old hand" (Elsner (1993) 35). The fact the art gallery here is in a temple (90.1), supports Elsner's view. Eumolpus seems at first like a "priest" or "initiate" with inside knowledge of *amor*.

What Eumolpus appears to be offering Encolpius is initiation into a different type of *amor*. In his shabby state of dress, he presents himself as someone who has rejected the prevailing corruption of materialism, and is therefore "the sort of person whom the rich tend to hate" (83.7). Bemoaning the way that lust for money has corrupted art (88), he pursues instead the "love of the intellect" (*amor ingenii*).

This lover of ideals is thus presented as a priest-like mentor who can guide both Encolpius and the reader out of the quagmire of materialism and initiate us into the mysteries of literature, in the same way as Plato's Diotima guides us up the ladder from love of beautiful bodies to love of the form of the beautiful (*Symposium* 211C). In pointing the errant Encolpius on a "straight path of life" (*rectum iter vitae*, 84.1), Eumolpus might allude more directly to Seneca's "straight path" in *Letters* 8, particularly as Seneca's views on the correct lifestyle are the same, namely avoidance of vulgar pleasures and scorn for luxuries (on Seneca's *Letters*, see Mannering in this volume).

This moralizing from Eumolpus is, of course, completely inconsistent with his behavior. He probably shares this inconsistency with everyone in the *Satyrica* who acts as Encolpius' guide or mentor. Near the beginning of the novel as we have it, the rhetorician

Agamemnon says that he will not deprive Encolpius of the "secret art" (*arte secreta* 3.2) of improving oratorical education, and one of his dikats is that one should not hunt after dinner invitations from unrestrained patrons (5); yet in practice he is happy to take up the invitation for dinner at Trimalchio's, the unrestrained dinner host *par excellence*.

Eumolpus is even more brazen in his failure to match his words with his actions. We saw above the "voyeurism" scene where the boy peeks through the keyhole at Eumolpus having sex with his sister. The poet had started out playing the part of a chaste philosopher who pursues "goodness" (*bonitas*), and is entrusted with the education of a boy and a girl by a woman called Philomela, whose name rings the alarm that sexual abuse is round the corner. Yet while the Philomela of myth was raped by her sister's husband Tereus, this Philomela has allowed herself to be abused in order to secure legacies from old men, and is now making her children follow in her footsteps: "So this woman went to Eumolpus and said she was entrusting her children to his judgment and goodness," *ea ergo ad Eumolpum venit et* ***commendare*** *liberos suos prundentiae* ***bonitatique*** (140.2). The training which Eumolpus in fact imparts to the girl is – predictably enough – sex-education, and the "goodness" which he imparts to her is his phallus (140.7): "he begged the girl to sit on top of his recommended goodness" (*puellam quidem exoravit ut sederet supra* ***commendatam bonitatem***). In this unseemly pederasty he reverses the example of Socratic mentoring: Plato's Alcibiades says that Socrates looks like a Silenus on the outside, but his appearance is deceptive, because he is utterly chaste on the inside (*Symposium* 215a8); Eumolpus plays the part of chaste philosopher but is a pederastic satyr within. (Cameron (1969) 369).

Guidance of any kind in the *Satyrica* almost inevitably means being led into sexual depravity. When Encolpius loses the way to his house and naively asks an old woman if she knows where he lives, she leads him to a brothel (7). As it turns out, he finds that his companion Ascyltos has been led to the brothel in a similar way: he could not find their lodging and was offered guidance "very decently" by a man who was playing the part of a respectable *paterfamilias* (8.2), but was in fact only helping Ascyltos because he wanted to have sex with him.

I have argued throughout that the readers of Petronius' novel are yoked in some way to Encolpius, and that the text is prepared for the reluctance of the reader to keep so closely yoked to him as he wallows in the filth. This makes it much more problematic than a satire which allows us to look down from a safe height and not feel in danger of contamination. As readers we are "looking" through the keyhole, and we are closer to Encolpius than we think. If he puts on a show of reluctance at a sordid marriage ceremony, but soon dispenses with his moral scruples, how sure are we that our continued viewing is not going to condemn us as hypocrites, even if we do wear an appropriate frown of disapproval? A similar process is at work when Encolpius is given corrupt or faulty guidance. When he finds himself not at home but at a brothel, he says that he "cursed the old woman for her trickery" (7.4). But it is quite possible that his apparent shock at finding himself in a brothel and his cursing of the old woman is just part of his usual routine of showing a token disapproval for being led into debauchery that he is in fact quite at home with. As the old woman says as she throws back the curtain to the brothel: "Here is where you *ought* to live!" Readers of the *Satyrica* also find ourselves being led astray again and again. Periodically we are offered lofty moral and literary ideals, a search for eloquence and the "spring of philosophy" (*philosophiae*

fontem, 88.8). Yet each time these ideas are introduced, the narrative then veers off the "straight path" of life and instead takes us on winding roads to the brothels, orgies, and extravagant dinner parties which the *literati* and prudes like to scoff at. The fount of inspiration for this orgiastic text is not the spring of philosophy, but "aphrodiasiac" (*satyrion*). The clientele in the *Satyrica*'s brothels have imbibed this in large quantities, both at 8.4 ("In fact everyone everywhere seemed to have drunk *satyrion*") and at Quartilla's orgy ("Has Encolpius downed all the *satyrion*?" 20.7: on the meta-literary importance of *satyrion*, see Rimell (2002) 16 and 176–7).

We shall, no doubt, spend some time playing Cato and protesting that we have been guided in the wrong direction, but like Encolpius we might be in danger of taking pleasure in a narrative that gives us a temporary holiday from the need to make a clear division between the low and the high, between brains and groins.

FURTHER READING

For the first-time reader of Petronius who wants a helpful guide, Slater (1990) *Reading Petronius* (Baltimore and London) is an excellent starting point. G. B. Conte (1996) *The Hidden Author* remains important in its attempt to construct the author's milieu and motivation, but it is worth reading this in conjunction with V. Rimell (2002) *Petronius and the Anatomy of Fiction*. G. Jensson's *The Recollections of Encolpius* (2004) is essential reading for his compelling discussion of the genre of the *Satyrica*.

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CHAPTER 15

Persius

Marden Fitzpatrick Nichols

The literary record of the Neronian age is dominated by authors, including Seneca, Petronius, and Lucan, who orbited the "Sun King" and eventually were consumed by the heat. What then shall we make of the high-born poet Aules Persius Flaccus (AD 34–62), who had been Lucan's schoolmate and was well acquainted with many other members of the Roman literati, yet maintained a cool distance from the imperial court and made not a single overt reference to Nero in his extant work? By the year 62, when an early death, apparently from a stomach ailment (*vitio stomachi*, *Vita Persii*), overtook Persius just shy of 28, Nero's literary enthusiasm had already had a transformative impact on Roman politics and culture. As early as 59, the emperor had assembled around him a circle of literary advisors, whose assistance and encouragement he rewarded with political offices and material gain. Persius was not among them. This imperial entourage seems to have inspired cliques of poetic imitators, eager to mimic the tastes and activities of the prolific and powerful (see Sullivan (1985) 74–114; Griffin (1984) 143–60). Persius has long been considered one of the most eloquent informants on the literary culture and courtly politics of this period precisely because he offers the alternative perspective of a nonconformist and detractor. His *Satires*, dedicated to no benefactor or sovereign, vehemently reject the standard means of securing and retaining poetic patronage as utterly corrupt. The poet implies that he cannot see much difference between a contemporary poetry recitation and a tawdry sex show (*Satires* 1.15–21). In Persius' *Satire* 1, the nobility glut themselves upon a performance of clichéd and melodramatic epic (1.30–36):

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> Ecce inter pocula quaerunt
> Romulidae saturi quid dia poemata narrent.
> hic aliquis, cui circum umeros hyacinthina laena est,
> rancidulum quiddam balba de nare locutus
> Phyllidas, Hypsipylas, vatum et plorabile siquid,
> eliquat ac tenero subplantat verba palato.
> adsensere viri.

Behold, during a drinking bout, Romulus' overstuffed descendants want to hear what the immortal poems recount. Immediately someone, who has a hyacinth cloak around his shoulders, articulating through his nose some putrid little thing, slowly recites *Phyllis*-es, *Hypsipyle*-s, anything typical of bards and worthy of tears, and he even stutters through the words on the delicate roof of his mouth. The men nod their approval.

The cantankerous persona who narrates this spectacle denies the aspiration to reach such audiences – or really anyone at all, save "maybe two, maybe one" (*vel duo vel nemo*, *Satires* 1.3). To the multitude of poets who seek immediate, unreflecting acclaim, Persius retorts "I balk at the suggestion that your 'terrific!' and 'nice one!' are the summit and ceiling of all merit!" (*sed recti finemque extremumque esse recuso / 'euge' tuum et 'belle'*, 1.48–9). So exceptional, it seems, is such reticence among Persius' greedy, opportunistic peers that the speaker must argue his case against an incredulous interlocutor. Persius distances his poetry still further from literary society by asserting that this interlocutor is not a real person, but rather "you whom I have just now invented to put the opposite case" (*Quisquis es, o modo quem ex adverso dicere feci*, 1.44). The refusal to face his adversaries, even as sparring partners, makes Persius' rejection of these conformists absolute.

Persius never released his poetry for wide circulation. For this reason, scholars often have assumed that the author intended the *Satires* only for the restricted audience of close friends and acquaintances who read unfinished drafts or heard the poet recite during his lifetime (Hooley (2007) 89). It is impossible to know if such diffidence to recognition would have continued had Persius lived past the age of 27. His predecessor Horace, for example, was at least 29 when he issued *Satires* 1 (*c.* 35–33 BC), his first book; assertions within it, if taken literally, could lead one to believe that Horace did not pursue publication or performances either (Horace, *Satires* 1.4.22–3) – though we know that he did. After Persius' death, under the direction of his beloved Stoic teacher Lucius Annaeus Cornutus (see Bryan in this volume), the lyric poet Caesius Bassus edited six complete hexameter satires and a short "prologue" in the choliambic metre for dissemination (664 verses in total). Commentaries were quick to appear. The Roman grammarian and critic Marcus Valerius Probus, a native of Berytus (modern-day Beirut) who flourished during the Flavian dynasty (AD 69–96), was the probable author of the brief extant *Life of Persius* (*Vita Persii*), from which most of what is known of Persius' life has been gleaned, to accompany his commentary on the poems. (This *Life* has survived on account of its inclusion in manuscripts of Suetonius' *Lives of the Poets*.) The poet Martial, in epigram 29 of his fourth book, published for the Saturnalia of AD 88, playfully attributes Persius' popularity to the brevity of his oeuvre. Quintilian's handbook for rhetorical education *Institutio Oratoria* (*c.* AD 95) states that even though he wrote only one book, Persius' reputation is both high and well deserved (10.1.94). Decimus

Iunius Iuvenalis, or "Juvenal," (AD 67–130s (?)), the next of the Roman satirists whose works survive, could not but allude to the works of Persius, which were already classics.

Persius continued to be read and enjoyed in the centuries that followed as well: though the satirist certainly had his detractors, the bitter attacks which Marcus Cornelius Fronto (*c.* AD 95–166) leveled against Lucan in the second century AD, and which many others directed at both Lucan and Juvenal in later antiquity, seem not to have tarnished Persius' reputation. The *Historia Augusta* spins the tale that the emperor Alexander Severus (AD 222–35) paraphrased from the *Satires* in a letter to the governor of Gaul (*Historia Augusta* Pescennius Niger 3.11; Persius, *Satires* 1.103–4). Severus' rumored "muttering" (*susurrans*) of a line of Persius seems a singularly appropriate form of recitation (*Historia Augusta* Alexander Severus 44.9; Persius, *Satires* 2.69). Persius frequently refers to muttering in the *Satires* (2.6: *susurros*; 2.6: *murmurque*; 2.9: *murmurat*; 3.81: *murmura*; 5.11: *murmure*), and even conflates this manner of speaking with his own poetic art ("am I forbidden to mutter?" *me muttire nefas*, *Satires* 1.119). The poet's moralizing ingratiated him with teachers, who used him as a school text, and among Christian fathers, most notably St. Jerome. The sound preservation of the text results from a robust manuscript tradition. Persius retained a readership with relative consistency from late antiquity through the Middle Ages and Renaissance. The *Satires* were among the first printed books. The earliest edition appeared in Rome in 1469 or 1470; 1605 marked the publication of Casaubon's masterful one. The merits and flaws of the *Satires* were of great interest to John Dryden. Persius influenced Alexander Pope and John Donne; Thomas Sheridan, father of R. B. Sheridan, was among his translators (Frost (1968); Reckford (2009)).

To many of Persius' recent readers, the poet's mainstream critical appeal in ages past seems odd: after all, Persius' writing is, to our sensibilities, some of the most bizarre and inscrutable in the classical canon. Condensed and idiosyncratic syntax, unexpected or discombobulated imagery and rapid shifts in topic make for difficult reading. It is hard to imagine even contemporary, native speakers of Latin digesting Persius' "strong brew" (*aliquid decoctius*, literally "something more boiled down," *Satires* 1.125) without struggle. For several decades, however, literary scholars have enlivened us to the possibility that Persius may have adopted this perplexing, even exasperating, style as a means of illustrating his frustration at the distorted, disfigured society around him (e.g. Anderson (1966); Gowers (1994); Freudenburg (2001) 173–83). By cultivating a poetics willfully disjointed, in other words, Persius makes the medium the message. This chapter provides inroads into such notoriously complex poetry by considering the relationship of Persius' satires to their generic predecessors and analyzing the means by which the poet crafts a unique authorial persona in dialogue with this tradition. After a closer look at an ancient biography of the poet and at each of the seven extant satires, the chapter also discusses Persius' Stoicism and the poet's relationships with his literary and political milieus. The challenge these satires pose to the study of Neronian literature and culture lies not only in the idiosyncratic style with which the poet conveys his poetic, moral, and philosophical ideas, but also in Persius' often seamless integration of allusions to the literary past with reflection upon the troubling concerns of his own time.

Isolation, not just from the literary culture of his day, but also from society at large, is a recurrent theme within Persius' *Satires* (Ragghianti (2007)). Both his aggressive moralizing and his claim to eschew literary polish in favor of the rough diction of

everyday speech present the author as an outsider in Neronian Rome. These very qualities, however, also convey to readers that Persius is an insider within the tradition of Roman satire. By rejecting a posse of contemporaries, Persius joins an intergenerational lineage of poets writing in a unique genre. An understanding of verse satire as a particular type of Roman poetry is crucial to appreciating the ancient contexts in which Persius' poetry was composed, performed, and assessed. Today, the label of "satire" often conveys little more than that an illustration, text, or performance is both humorous and critical. Romans reading Persius' poetry, however, would have understood a narrower meaning.

An anthology of verse in various meters by Quintus Ennius (239–169 BC) is the earliest known work to be called *Saturae*, though it is unclear whether Ennius himself or a later editor chose the title. Diomedes, a grammarian of the fourth century AD, states that Ennius' nephew Pacuvius (220–130 BC) also composed satires. Few fragments survive of Ennius' satires; of Pacuvius' attempts, nothing remains (Flintoff (1990)). The name *satura* almost certainly derives from the Latin adjective *satur*, meaning full or sated. The common employment of this word to describe a dish full to its brim with food for religious offerings, the *lanx satura*, made it an apt choice to characterize the creation of a literary hodgepodge of diverse subjects and forms. Over time, as Roman satirists increasingly defined themselves as castigators of vice, very often including excessive banqueting and gluttony, such culinary echoes took on added resonance.

Today the words "satyr" and "satire" are considered to be etymologically unrelated, but in antiquity, some satiric practitioners and their commentators speculated that the two might share a common origin and drew attention to resemblances between the Roman satirists – aggressive, yet playful, scourges of society – and the mythological satyrs – companions of Dionysus known not only for their appetites for wine and sex and penchant for mischief-making, but also for their wisdom (see discussions in Van Rooy (1965) 2–20; Gowers (1993a) 109–26). Greek "satyr plays" were placed at the end of each series of three tragedies at the Athenian Dionysia to lighten the mood. Like Roman satire, this form of drama pulled back a curtain to reveal the vulgar and banal aspects of life, poking fun, all the while, at loftier, more dignified forms of artistry in which bestial desires and weaknesses remained veiled.

Quintilian, cataloguing literary forms in his *Institutio Oratoria*, draws attention to the special status of satire as the only genre completely Roman in its conception: "satire, at least, is all ours" (*satura, quidem, tota nostra est*, 10.1.93). Like many forms of Latin literature, however, satire took inspiration from Greek prototypes. In formulating the broad social criticisms and biting personal attacks that became trademarks of their genre, Roman satirists were influenced by the invective poets of the seventh to sixth centuries BC, whose surviving works include Hipponax' caustic verses against the sculptor Bupalus (apparently so damaging that Bupalus committed suicide), Archilochus' forceful claims to hate his enemies, and Semonides' extended diatribe against women of various types. As both Horace and Persius attest (Horace, *Satires* 1.4.1–7; Persius 1.123–5), Roman satirists also looked to the fifth-century BC Athenian playwrights of Old Comedy, who mimicked, mocked, and disparaged the prominent men of their city and questioned the value systems that empowered them. Other contributions to the genre came from the diatribes of the Cynic and Stoic philosophers, the gentler New Comedy of the fourth to third century BC, and even Homeric epic. The move to create a new type of Roman literature in response to these Greek influences, nonetheless, was a bold and exceptional one.

The adoption of seemingly self-referential authorial personae, alleged truth-tellers of their own experiences, set Roman satirists apart from the poetic mainstream. This quality has at times beguiled scholars into viewing the world depicted in satire as transparently historical. Satire does, after all, provide our richest poetic source of references to Roman daily life, as well as to the city's cultural, architectural, and social landscapes. Over the past several decades, however, in the wake of William S. Anderson's pivotal scholarship, originating in his doctoral dissertation (1954), scholars have been increasingly aware of the flexibility with which Roman satirists assume a panoply of roles, including preacher, censor, friend, reprobate, clown, philosopher, and teacher, as well as the rapidity with which their tone can change – from angry to jovial, from thoughtful to bored (Braund (1996)). Shape-shifting of this kind makes satire seem less open-heartedly confessional. Not unlike the oratory, drama, or pedagogy that were all important influences upon it (Keane (2006)), satire relies upon the performance of multiple personae, the art of self-fashioning, the masquerade.

Gaius Lucilius (d. 103/102 BC) deserves the title of founder of the genre; while preserving the sense of smorgasbord or medley, his poetry also established numerous emblematic features of Roman satire, including the predominant use of dactylic hexameter, an assertively critical authorial persona, and a thematic interest in the limits of free speech (*libertas*). Satire, in his wake, became highly self-reflexive; his literary successors continually reconsider the definition of the genre and their places within it (Freudenburg (2001)). Lucilius' 30 books of satires were widely read and quoted at many points during antiquity. Only around 1,400 lines survive, in fragments. Written in a conversational voice, the satires are rife with acute witticisms, racy personal anecdotes, sensationalist rumors, and insults leveled against contemporaries. Generally agreed to have been born into an affluent family of senatorial status, Lucilius exercised his privilege by acquiring and enjoying powerful friendships, including that of P. Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus, destroyer of Carthage in 146 BC, rather than by seeking office himself. The sense of security that accompanied his social position, it is often thought, also emboldened him to follow the Greek invective poets in reviling by name those who had committed offences great (such as political corruption) and small (for example, neglecting to visit the poet during his illness) (Gruen (1993)).

The reverence in which the Romans held Lucilius' works, and the charisma of his unique authorial voice, may have made it difficult to follow in his footsteps. Quintus Horatius Flaccus (65–8 BC), or Horace, achieved that feat in two books of satires (*c.* 35–33 and 30 BC), by contradicting the standards set by Lucilius as often as he heeded them (Muecke (2007)). The circumstances under which Horace wrote satire were decidedly different from those that gave rise to his literary forebear. A member of the generation who lived through the bloody and divisive transition from Republic to Principate, Horace was keenly aware of new restrictions placed on free speech. Horace was, so we understand both from his *Satires* and from a *Life* composed by Suetonius, a freedman's son born in Venusia in Apulia. Well educated in Rome and Athens, Horace fought in Brutus' army, the losing side at Philippi in 42 BC. Through the recommendations of Virgil and Varius, he nevertheless entered the patronage of Maecenas and, eventually, Augustus. The *Satires* and *Epodes*, his earliest works, represent a period when both Horace's status and the political situation at Rome were in flux. As a financial and social dependent of more powerful men, Horace was hardly in a

position to write freewheeling, controversial satire in the Lucilian vein (Oliensis (1998); Freudenburg (2001) 15–124). Horace's *Satires* convey familiarity through the narration of supposedly personal experiences: the poet takes readers on both a short walk and a long journey and, without friendship-endangering indiscretions, allows them to listen in on conversations and witness his most private and corporeal embarrassments (Gowers (2003)). Such self-presentation, nonetheless, appears guarded in the wake of Lucilius. When the whipping boy and the speaker consistently are one, satire loses some of its edge. Rather than identifying this as a limitation to *libertas*, Horace argues for the superiority of judicious restraint. Allusions to contemporary politics are, for the most part, glancing and coy. In an Epicurean manner, Horatian satire makes the case that true freedom lies in the escape from political involvement into the calm and leisure of the private realm (Gowers (1993b)).

Lucilius' legacy is pervasive in Horace's *Satires*, both when openly acknowledged and confronted and when evoked in setting, theme, or subject matter. Yet where Lucilius' temper was volatile, Horace remains placid and bemused in the satires he entitled *Sermones*, or "Chats." Lucilius was a gossip; Horace refrains from divulging details of his famous friends' lives, adhering to the mundane particulars of his own experience even when narrating a shared journey rife with political intrigue (Horace, *Satires* 1.5). Horace followed Lucilius' example in attacking vice in generalized, philosophical terms, much less often than he indulged Lucilius' penchant for pointing fingers. Lucilius was prolific; Horace likens his forefather's verbosity to a muddy stream overburdened with silt (*Satires* 1.10.50–51). Roman poets of the late Republic had adopted principles of succinctness and artistic control in admiration for the third-century BC scholar and poet Callimachus, who encouraged the cultivation of a "slender Muse" (Zetzel (2002)). In Horace's hands, satire became a more meticulous and concise form of poetry, and thus an outgrowth of the Hellenistic literary aesthetics popular during his own time (Freudenburg (1993)).

Persius was certainly not alone among his contemporaries in writing in a sarcastic or critical mode. Two works of so-called "Menippean satire" (a mix of prose and verse) survive from the Neronian period, Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* and Petronius' *Satyrica* (see Whitton and Murgatroyd in this volume). Persius' *Satires*, however, stand apart from these in their interest in the tradition – and adherence to the form – of verse satire. On account of the fragmentary state of Lucilius' poetry, the full extent of Horace's debt to that earlier satirist remains unknown. Persius' relationship with Horace's well-preserved satires, by contrast, amply rewards study in detail (see especially Hooley (1997)). Persius provides his reader with a brief outline of his views on Lucilius and Horace: the former uses his teeth to tear into "the City" and breaks a molar on his targets Lupus and Mucius; the latter prefers less aggressive actions, the moral superiority of dangling the public from a "blown nose" and the subtlety of seizing a moment while a friend is laughing to finger the friend's hidden vices (Persius, *Satires* 1.114–118). In general, however, Persius' satires eschew the kind of programmatic statements used by Horace to situate himself in relation to Lucilius. Persius favors continual, pointed references that turn Horatian words, phrases, lines, situations, and themes on their heads. The Neronian satirist presumes readers' exhaustive familiarity with Horace's *Odes* and *Epistles*, as well as his *Satires*. Evocations of Horace suffuse nearly every line of Persius. In spite of this, there is no danger of confusing two satirists of such disparate styles. The effect may be

summed up in Persius' claim to be "skilled at the harsh juxtaposition" (*iunctura callidus acri*, *Satires* 5.14), a spin on Horace's poetic advice to pursue the "skilful juxtaposition" (*callida . . . iunctura*, Horace, *Ars Poetica* 47–8) that points up Persius' quite different aesthetic aims. Persius, whose poetic persona does not share Horace's calm and steady demeanor, transforms Horace's sunny vista on humanity into a nightmare vision of disgust and despair. People are inherently wicked (2.63), and little can be done to redeem them. Persius characterizes himself as adept at giving fading morals a good scrub and at striking at a defect with candid humor (5.15–16).

The previously established satiric trend towards a narrowing of word count and a decline in apparent candor continued with Persius. Contrast Horace's over 2000 lines of satire with Persius' fewer than 700. In comparison with the satires of Lucilius and Horace, Persius' poetry provides strikingly few of the kind of intimate details and views on contemporary persons and events that once were read as transparently autobiographical and now more often are considered the hallmarks of a carefully crafted literary persona. Often when Persius employs an anecdotal mode, he takes pains to mar any sense of intimacy. In the dialogue between a hungover student and a disapproving interlocutor (*Satire* 3), for example, the satirist switches masks at a dizzying pace and it is impossible to know for sure whether one or both nameless characters is to be identified with the poet. While Horace's satires praise the character of his patron Maecenas and colorfully illustrate the inner sensations of the poet during their first encounter (Horace, *Satire* 1.6), Persius' celebration of his mentor Cornutus focuses upon their philosophical and astrological compatibility, with little in the way of individualizing details (Persius, *Satire* 5). Moral generalities, rather than distinct characters, form the core of Persius' *Satires*. Persius' contribution to the genre of satire was to pull away from personalized details and stories in favor of stock caricatures (e.g. the centurion, the wealthy man, the grandmother) and generalized harangues that encourage readers to look inward while keeping the author's own private world out of view.

What we know about the poet's life largely derives from Probus' brief *Life of Persius* (*Vita Persii*). For some readers, this *Life* has compensated for Persius' disinclination towards the personal anecdote by creating a sense of familiarity with the poet himself. Thus, in 1909, H. E. Butler said that it was "possible to form a clearer picture of the personality of Aulus Persius Flaccus, the satirist, than of any other poet of the Silver Age" (Butler (1969) 79). Most scholars today, however, would wager that the author of the *Life* invented or embellished many details, for instance that Persius was of "mildest manner, virginal bashfulness and good looks" (*morum lenissimorum, verecundiae virginalis, formae pulchrae*), in order to heighten the moral color, human interest, or rhetorical effect of the portrait. Even so, it remains customary to consider the *Life* reliable in its representation of the basic facts and general outline of Persius' life. From it, we learn that Persius was a wealthy member of the equestrian class and a native of the city of Volaterrae (present-day Volterra) on the western coast of Italy, in Etruria. This account of his origins coheres well with his Etruscan *praenomen* Aules, sometimes Latinized as "Aulus," and the Etruscan name of his mother Fulvia Sisennia. It also adds humor to the Stoic interlocutor's snide references to both the Etruscan pedigree and equestrian status of the lazy student of the third satire (*Satires* 3.27–9).

The Persii, relatives of the Caecinnae, appear to have been a leading family of Volaterrae. As would have been customary for men of his status, Persius was educated in

Rome by prominent pedagogues from the age of 12. He studied under both Remmius Palaemon, one of Rome's most prominent teachers (whom Suetonius renders as a kind of satiric caricature on account of his reputation for luxury (*On Grammarians* 23)), and Verginius Flavus, who authored a well-received text on rhetoric (Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 7.4.40). The *Life* also suggests that Persius, who it seems was not politically ambitious, lived a somewhat secluded philosophical and literary life (though trips to Rome must have been frequent) and died on his ancestral estate.

The *Life* emphasizes Persius' close relationship with his mother, his sister (or perhaps sisters – the narrative is inconsistent), and his aunts. We read not only that Persius' father died when the poet was six, but also that his stepfather Fusius perished soon after marrying Sisennia. Many scholars have noted that these details (coupled with the above-mentioned description of the poet's sweet nature) create an impression of Persius as coddled and sheltered, just "one of the girls." However, they also implicitly contrast the home life of Persius with that of his satiric predecessor Horace (who emphasizes the positive moral influence and academic support of his father in *Satire* 1.6) and pave the way for highlighting the importance of Persius' scholarly mentors. The *Life* explicitly mentions, for example, that Persius honored the historian Servilius Nonianus as a father (*Coluit ut patrem Servilium Nonianum*). It also describes Cornutus as the poet's constant companion. The social status of Persius, a man of independent means without need of a patron, was more like that of Maecenas, another well-connected Etruscan equestrian, than like that of Horace. While Horace repeatedly thanks his patron and companion Maecenas, Persius offers a similar expression of thanks to Cornutus (*Satire* 5).

The *Life* portrays Persius not as friendless and reclusive, but rather as nested within a diverse group of intellectuals. Many of these acquaintances may well have originated from the foot traffic at Cornutus' house, where Persius met the physician Claudius Agathurnus and Petronius Aristocrates of Magnesia, who became his friends. Regarding two other acquaintances of Persius whom the poet presumably encountered at this house, the *Life* offers choice gossip: Lucan, it seems, was a great fan of Persius' poetry, and Persius no admirer of Seneca. Cornutus was not just a guiding influence during Persius' life, but also the architect of the poet's legacy after his death. The *Life* informs us that Cornutus advised the poet's mother to destroy a *praetexta*, or historical drama on a Roman topic, which Persius wrote early in his career, as well as another work that was perhaps an account of Persius' own travels (the manuscript tradition is corrupted), and a few verses on the elder Arria, the wife of Caecina Paetus.

A summary of Persius' extant poems can do only partial justice to the variety of themes and imagery contained within them. In 14 lines usually considered a prologue (though in some manuscripts they conclude the book), the poet fails to fulfill expectations: he does not declare his satiric principles or objectives; he does not catalog a litany of vices to be condemned. Instead of the standard dactylic hexameter, Persius opts for choliambics, referred to as "limping iambics" because of modifications to the stress in the last foot of each line. The Greek invective poet Hipponax pioneered the meter, which both Callimachus and Horace later adopted. In the opening lines, Persius denies that he patterns himself according to standard models of the poet who receives divine inspiration at Hippocrene (in Greek, "the horse's spring"), on Mount Helicon, or by sleeping at a sacred place: "I neither moistened my lips at the horse's spring, nor do I remember dreaming on twin-peaked Parnassus, so that I might, suddenly, spring forth

a poet'' (*Nec fonte labra prolui caballino / nec in bicipiti somniasse Parnaso / memini, ut repente sic poeta prodirem*, Preface 1–3). The allusion to Parnassus, which had one peak dedicated to Apollo and the other to Dionysus, as a locus of poetry-making is unsurprising. Yet according to tradition, such dreams occurred on Mount Helicon. By mangling the tradition, Persius demonstrates his indifference, or even scorn (but see other interpretive possibilities in Freudenburg (2001) 134–6). The targets of such abuse are not the canonical poets who originated such practices, but rather the poetasters he likens to magpies and ravens (Preface 13–14), the contemptible mimics who aspire to style, neglecting substance.

Criticism and disavowal of contemporary Roman literary society continues in *Satire* 1 (134 lines). The satirist rejects numerous potential audiences. Only fans of Old Comedy, he admits near the end of the poem, might be able to stomach him (*Satires* 1.123–5). Somewhat paradoxically, Persius also voices frustration at the limitations placed on his free expression, which keep him silent, or at least bar him from telling a prized secret. Though presumably Persius could summon the *gravitas* of the satiric tradition to ennoble his desire to divulge, he instead belittles the urge, likening it to the impulses of children to urinate in public (*Satires* 1.113–14) – an allusion to the description of the mad poet in Horace's *Ars Poetica* (''Nor is it completely clear why he habitually composes verses, whether he has urinated on ancestral ashes or has sinfully discomposed a sacred place. He is definitely crazy,'' *nec satis apparet cur versus factitet, utrum / minxerit in patrios cineres, an triste bidental / moverit incestus. certe furit*, *Ars Poetica* 470–72). Suspense in this first satire builds around Persius' secret, which ultimately slips out: ''is there anyone who does not have donkey's ears?'' (*auriculas asini quis non habet*, *Satires* 1.121). Can this universal critique of humanity really have been such a skeleton in the poet's closet? There was a rumor in antiquity that during the course of preparing the *Satires* for publication, Cornutus modified a line written by Persius, ''King Midas has donkey's ears'' (*auriculas asini Mida rex habet*) to the more open-ended version that appears in all the manuscripts (*Satires* 1.121), for the reason that such an explicit reference to the ruler with the golden touch might be read not as a condemnation of undiscerning patrons in general, but as a gibe against Nero (*Vita Persii*). Persius seems to court precisely this kind of intrigue by delaying the revelation and emphasizing the stakes that surround it. He will not even whisper it into a hole in the ground (*Satires* 1.119–20), like the barber who divulged Midas' secret was known to have done.

Persius could hardly have criticized the living Nero in bald terms. Rather, the satirist's talent lies in lodging possible insults to Nero just below the surface (Sullivan (1978); Gowers (1994); Freudenburg (2001) 125–298). Should the ''belly'' named as the ''art director and talent scout'' of bad poets, for instance, be identified with the corpulent ruler (*magister artis ingenique largitor / venter*, Preface 10–11)? Any contemporary of Persius who might have interpreted the *Satires* as slander against Nero would have exposed him- or herself as an imperial detractor. The overblown and clichéd poetic quotations at *Satires* 1.99–102, possibly excerpted from Nero's own works, might be an exception to Persius' discretion. Suetonius claims to have had access to some of Nero's poetry (*Nero* 52), but does not quote it. The epigrammatist Martial employs the jargon of an earlier generation of Hellenistic poets at Rome, the Neoterics, to characterize the emperor's literary pretensions (''learned,'' *doctus*, Martial 8.70.8). Whether or not the

lines in Persius' *Satire* 1.99–102 are Nero's, the blunt force of Persius' literary criticism falls hard against the Greek-inspired principles his ruler cherished.

Persius' only overt reference to a Roman emperor is an assertion of eagerness to make a contribution towards Caligula's triumph (*Satires* 6.43). It may be true that the similarities between the young Caligula and the young Nero make Persius' sarcastic enthusiasm for Caligula's triumph an implicit criticism of Nero. Crucially, however, Persius keeps his tone ambiguous in order to rest the similarity or difference between the two rulers in the eyes of the beholder. Persius composed his *Satires* during the first years of Nero's reign, when the emperor's reputation was not yet spoiled – thus any reflection on Nero in these lines should be located along a spectrum of developing opinions, at a time when, in some corners, enthusiasm for Nero was certainly strong (Freudenburg (2001) 127). Indiscernibility of this kind is a carefully crafted feature of Persius' poetics, as is superfluous or exaggerated secrecy, as seen in Persius' beckoning to his interlocutor to come away from the crowd in order to hear a secret everyone knows (*Satires* 6.41–2). In light of this, the satirist's self-identification as a secret-keeper in *Satire* 1 seems like a programmatic statement.

Disparagement of contemporary society continues in *Satire* 2 (75 lines), introduced as a birthday-poem in honor of his friend Plotius Macrinus, but principally concerned with the wickedness of others. Persius imports the tone and subject matter of "diatribe" (works of popular moral philosophy, often originating in street address or teaching contexts and focusing on singular vices) into the form of verse satire. Numerous precedents in Horace's *Satires* shape Persius' approach to the diatribe tradition (Horace, *Satires* 1.1–3, 2.2, 2.3, 2.7). Moreover, Persius' *Satire* 2 would later lend its theme, vain prayers, to Juvenal's well-known *Satire* 10. *Satire* 2 calls attention to the superficiality of most peoples' prayers, whispered entreaties to the gods for such selfish things as the death of a rich relative from whom they might inherit (2.9–10). Persius undercuts individuals' attempts to bribe the divine; adopting a haughty stance, he supports only such offerings as "justice and right conjoined in the spirit" (*compositum ius fasque animo*, 2.73).

The two satires that follow structure diatribe as a conversation in a manner reminiscent of Horace's *Satires* 2.3 and 2.7. In Persius' *Satire* 3 (118 lines), a hungover student is awoken by an interlocutor, perhaps an overbearing friend or his own conscience, who excoriates the drunkard and encourages him to get back to his studies. This unnamed person sternly reminds the student of Stoic principles. Sensing resistance, he employs graphic and grotesque medical imagery – a sore (*Satires* 3.113); boiling blood (*Satires* 3.116) – in order to illustrate the dangers of giving into the madness of a pleasure-seeking, lazy, and superficial life. The brief *Satire* 4 (52 lines) is an adaptation of *Alcibiades* 1, a dialogue attributed to Plato (Denyer (2001)). A Socrates figure cautions Alcibiades not to give way to external flatteries; instead the young politician should direct his attention inward, in order to contemplate virtue.

Satire 5 is the longest (191 lines) and can be said to consist of two parts. The first (5.1–51) contains a conversation between the poet and his Stoic teacher Cornutus, in which each confirms his regard for the other. It is believed that Persius met Lucius Annaeus Cornutus, of Leptis in Africa, shortly after he assumed the *toga virilis* (on his sixteenth birthday). Cornutus, whose birth and death dates are unknown, was presumably a freedman of the Annaei, the family of Seneca and his nephew Lucan, who was Cornutus' pupil (Most (1989)). An extremely learned man, Cornutus was

knowledgeable in philosophy, rhetoric, and grammar. He also gained renown as a tragedian; possibly he wrote satire as well. Cornutus' main influence upon Persius' poetry, however, was as an instructor in Stoicism. In a description of their encounter, which harkens back to Horace's description of his first meeting with Maecenas in *Satire* 1.6, Persius describes Cornutus' mentorship as a "Socratic embrace" using a phrase that embraces the very name of Cornutus (*Socratico*, *Cornute, sinu*, 5.37). It is in tribute to their shared Stoicism that Persius devotes almost the entirety of *Satire* 5 to philosophical concerns: the second part of *Satire* 5, after a narrative bridge (5.52–72) of generalities about humankind, which champions the value of philosophy, adapts the theme of Horace's *Satire* 2.7, in order to present an extended meditation on the Stoic paradox that only the sage is free and every fool a slave to weakness of some kind (*Satires* 5.73–191).

Satire 6 (80 lines) is an experiment in letter-writing; Persius writes from the Ligurian coast to his friend the poet Caesius Bassus, who is, in Horatian style, at a Sabine retreat. Persius' theme is living a comfortable life without greed. The satire thus matches a Horatian theme (the "golden mean") to Horace's – perhaps also Lucilius' – signature epistolary style in order to address a scholar of Horace's poetry and imitator of Horace's *Odes*. The blunt force of Persius' anger and criticism is dulled in this final poem, though the satire does roundly criticize the hopes of a hypothetical heir. These lines may also comment on Persius' problematic position as both an heir to the genre and a conveyor of the tradition to future generations of satirists.

Though Persius was long classified as the "Stoic satirist" and believed to have pursued philosophy "with an ardour beyond that conventionally thought proper by the Romans" (Jenkinson (1980) 1), current scholarship emphasizes the playful attitude and degree of freedom with which Persius both reconfigured and questioned Stoic doctrine (Cucchiarelli (2005)). Authorial personae within Roman satire could hardly absent themselves, or their chosen creeds, from mockery. Persius conforms to this convention in *Satire* 3, in which the satirist can plausibly be identified with the figure of a lazy and hungover Stoic student. We may also note the centurion at the end of *Satire* 5, whose coarse laughter may or may not undercut the seriousness of the intense philosophical admonitions that precede it (5.189–91). In *Satire* 6, moreover, the authorial persona seems to lack commitment to any dogma, relying instead upon the conventions and sentiments of a Horatian epistle to dictate an interest in countryside leisure.

The injection of Stoic commonplaces, paradoxes, and metaphors into Persius' verse, nevertheless serves as one of the Neronian satirist's greatest departures from his predecessor. Stoic sages and teachers elicit scorn in Horace's *Satires*. Epicureanism as championed by Horace, a gently rambling high road, strongly contrasts with Stoicism as promoted by Persius, an uphill struggle, beset with brambles (Gowers (1993a) 180–81). Stoic influence is most apparent in *Satires* 3 and 4, where Persius alludes to his Stoic education, and in *Satire* 5, where the satirist identifies himself as having been, at one time, a Stoic student and espouses many Stoic tenets. Persius' harangues against all manner of folly, including weakness, greed, self-indulgence, ambition, gluttony, laziness, hypocrisy, and decadence, sound to us like angry sermons or moral essays. Ancient readers would have recognized the subject matter of Stoic diatribe. Graphic images of sex, violence, and bodily functions, for instance, call to mind the didactic strategies used by Stoic moralists to turn their audiences against vice. Persius' description of the insidious nature of vice

and the danger it poses to the moral self evokes Stoic wisdom (*Satires* 3.32–4). The satirist urges his readers to become more ethical through self-criticism, to learn to know themselves: "spit out what you are not" (*respue quod non es*, *Satires* 4.51). In a Stoic manner, he associates wrongdoing with insanity. While Horace had poked fun at the Stoic maxim that only a wise man is sane (Horace *Satires* 2.3.43–6), Persius presents it as gospel. Manifesting a concern central to both Stoics and satirists, Persius encourages his readers to uncover hidden flaws and unmask disguised ones (*Satires* 3.113–14; 4.44–5).

Persius was not a philosopher: his *Satires* do little to nuance or advance the creed. Their contribution, rather, is to embed Stoicism within an artistic medium where it had not previously found a voice. Persius' treatment of the figure of the "ambitious builder,"or patron of decadent private architecture often targeted by Stoic moralists, exemplifies this process of recontextualization. In the *Satires* we find no coherent, clichéd portrait of a homeowner who bedecks his oversized house with costly furnishings and elaborate wall paintings carried out in exorbitant pigments (Edwards (1993)). Rather, Persius intersperses motifs from Roman moralizing in passing, in a manner that assumes his readers' familiarity (and even satiety) with the discourse. He conveys the over-stylization and excessiveness of contemporary literature by likening it, in *Satire* 1, to an extremely expensive type of furniture: "in short, really, is it not engraved on citron-wood couches?" (*non quidquid denique lectis / scribitur in citreis*, 1.52–3) and, in *Satire* 5, to a painted wall: "you [Cornutus] are on your guard to distinguish between what rings solid and the stucco of a painted tongue" (*dinoscere cautus / quid solidum crepet et pictae tectoria linguae*, 5.24–5). A fragment of Lucilian satire (84–5, Warmington), which compares speech ornamented with Graecisms to a tessellated pavement, confirms that images from the decorative arts entered the critical repertoire of the Roman satirists early on. Much more frequently, however, Persius uses culinary, corporeal, and medical imagery to convey judgments that are both aesthetic and moral. The human body provides Persius with some of his most distinctive and memorable descriptions: the recitation audience-member's ejaculating eye (1.18); a greedy heart, trembling with pleasure, that shakes out drops from the left breast (2.53–4); the bottle-green bile of a hungover student (3.8); the vain attempts of the nudist to groom his pubic and buttock hair (4.33–41); the centurions both bulging-veined (5.189) and smelly (3.77); the would-be heir, stuffed with goose innards, whose sexual intercourse with a patrician woman is described in gory detail (6.71–3).

Persius declares that his self-consciously harsh poetry, if his audience will allow their ears to be violated by it (1.107–8), can be artistically, as well as morally, corrective. By the time Persius was composing satires, almost a century after Horace, the Hellenistic literary trend towards erudite, polished verse had, so the poet tells us, become horribly clichéd. Nero's enthusiasm for the slender Muse, an extension of his notorious fascination with Greece and Greek artistry, could only have deepened the taint. As literary critics, Persius and Petronius seem to have been likeminded: admirers of Horace and Virgil, neither had much patience for the oratory or epic of his Neronian contemporaries. To aid his defense of the natural cadences of Latin, Persius arouses his readers' patriotic spirit: the diction of the *Satires* is "speech characteristic of the toga" (*verba togae*, *Satires* 5.14). *Satire* 5 swears off elevated genres: "let those about to declaim in the grand style bring together the clouds of Helicon, if there are some who want to boil the pot of Procne, or of Thyestes for the frequent dinner-parties of unsalted Glyco" (*grande*

locuturi nebulas Helicone legunto, / si quibus aut Procnes aut si quibus olla Thyestae / fervebit saepe insulso cenanda Glyconi, 5.7–9). In these lines, Persius dismisses the tragic genre (alluded to in the mention of Procne and Thyestes, both characters in tragic stories in which people are cooked and served as a meal for revenge), especially when practiced by Glyco, supposedly a famous tragic actor of the first century AD. He also repeats a gesture previously seen in his choliambic prologue: that of shrugging off the Muses (the inhabitants of Mount Helicon). In the prologue, Persius renounces a fountain in Corinth favored both by Pegasus (sacred to the Muses), and by poets in search of inspiration: "the Heliconians and grey-green Pirene I leave to those whose busts the tenacious ivy licks" (*Heliconidasque pallidamque Pirenen / illis remitto quorum imagines lambuent / hederae sequaces*, Preface 4–6). The poet, in other words, does not aspire to the honor of a bust overgrown with ivy displayed in some library or courtyard.

In order to contrast himself with the magpies who seek to imitate grand verse in the Ennian epic vein, the role Persius proposes for himself in the prologue is that of a *semipaganus*. This word might be translated "half-rustic" or "semi-yokel," perhaps even "half-poet." The obscurity of the term, which Persius may have coined for the occasion, was surely intentional. *Semipaganus* smacks of simplicity and rural concerns, the proffered values of the Roman moralists; it conveys disdain for lofty, artificial literary genres; it perhaps even hints at Persius' own semi-provincial upbringing between Rome and the Italian town of Volaterrae (the Paganalia was the Roman public festival of the *pagi*, or village communities). Yet the very evasiveness and irresolution (*semi-*) of the label make a separate point: that Persius will be a poet who confuses and confounds, and one who avoids categorization. While it is true that Persius does not use many Graecisms and, in fact, makes fun of others who do, it is important to stress that his concentrated idiom was far removed from anything spoken on the street, even by the most educated. He frequently, for example, uses a verb's infinitive as a substantive ("that unhappy life of ours," *nostrum istud vivere triste*, 1.9). Furthermore, though he feigns disdain for stuffy literary erudition, Persius' poetry, in which nearly every line contains an echo of Horace, is as allusive as any in the classical tradition (Hooley (1997)).

Persius' Stoicism, which he shared in common with many imperial dissidents, and his criticism of the literary culture and aesthetics encouraged by Nero have led scholars to speculate that had he lived further into Nero's reign, Persius would surely have been exiled or killed, in spite of his reclusiveness. The number of Persius' friends or acquaintances named in the *Life* who ended up on the emperor's bad side elevates suspicion still further. The elder Arria, memorialized in the extant Martial 1.13 and mentioned above as the subject of lost verses by Persius, became a kind of Stoic martyr. Arria not only committed suicide alongside her condemned husband Caecina Paetus, but even inspired his courage by setting the example. She was also a distant relative of Persius and the mother-in-law of Persius' close friend, Thrasea Paetus. From the *Life*, we learn that Persius was very close to and travelled with Thrasea Paetus, who like many Neronian dissenters held staunch Stoic beliefs. Thrasea Paetus was forced to commit suicide in AD 66 on account of his opposition to the state. Both Seneca and Lucan were said to have been involved in the "Pisonian conspiracy" and were, once Nero uncovered the plot in AD 65, compelled to commit suicide. The two teachers under whom Persius had studied who were still alive at the time, Verginius Flavus and Cornutus, were banished.

Nero exiled Cornutus to an island in AD 65, reportedly on account of his impudence in suggesting that Nero's planned epic on Roman history would be too long: at 400 books, could it garner a readership? One of Nero's flatterers interjected that the Stoic philosopher Chrysippus had written much more, a fact that could hardly have been unfamiliar to Cornutus, who, we learn from the *Life of Persius*, had recently received 700 volumes of that very author from Persius' will. Cornutus' fate was sealed when he protested that Chrysippus' philosophy provided important life lessons, thereby implying that Nero's history would not (Dio 62.29). Cornutus' relationship with Nero and proximity to his circle, both during Persius' life and after it, are not well understood. We are left to wonder, if Persius had survived past AD 62, would he have joined his mentor in open mockery of the emperor?

The differences among Lucilius, Horace, and Persius shed light not only upon the tension between tradition and innovation in Latin poetry, but also upon the disparities among their social and political circumstances. While Lucilius had exploited the freedoms of a private citizen and man of leisure under the Republic, Horace wrote to maintain patronage and favor during the uncertain early years of Octavian's rule, when personal liberties became increasingly restricted. (Augustus looked over criticisms of himself, but he was known for book burning, when criticisms of his friends and associates were made known to him. The pamphleteer Cassius Severus was exiled for just such an offence.) The highly restricted nature of Persius' description of Roman personages and politics may be considered evidence of the difficulty inherent, even for a man of means, in keeping one's distance from the court once the 21-year-old Nero had established his circle in AD 59. The authorial personae of Horace, Persius, and later Juvenal, thus appear to have been self-consciously fashioned as mourners of the Republic and of *libertas*, who looked to Lucilius' satires as the original and true craft (Freudenburg (1993) 86–102; Keane (2006) 9).

Such readings of individual satirists, though intriguing, can become circular in their logic, as it is impossible to test the veracity of each against the work of other satirists of the same period to see if the hypothesis holds true. What we know about the Roman world is so informed by Roman satire that to use this "world" as a means of understanding satire becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy (Freudenburg (2001) 125). Nevertheless, Persius, who provides unique insight into the early period of Nero's reign, when the emperor's toxic reputation of later years was yet unformed, remains a prized informant on Neronian literature and politics as much for what his satires evade as for what they express. Through an ineffable medley of allusions, ideas, styles, and tones, they provide a glimpse into the variety – cacophony, even – of cultural influences in Neronian Rome.

FURTHER READING

The prevailing Latin edition of Persius is Clausen (1956); the most detailed commentary is Kissel (1990) (in German). See Clausen and Zetzel (2004) on the *Commentum Cornuti*, a collection of early exegesis on Persius probably compiled in the ninth century, and Zetzel (2005) for additional scholia. Students looking for an English guide to the poems should consult Harvey (1981), or the translations and commentaries accompanying the Latin editions of Jenkinson (1980) and Barr and Lee (1987). See Morford (1984) 97–107 on the critical history and literary influence of the

Satires. Braund (2004) brings Persius up to date for twenty-first-century readers with an excellent rendition of the poems. Rudd (1973) and Merwin (1981) offer alternative English versions. Braund et al. (2002) discusses challenges to the translator of Persius and showcases some student attempts.

Anderson (1960), (1966) and Reckford (1962) were instigators of the recent resurgence of interest in Persius (though Housman (1913) remains often cited). Anderson (1956), (1964), (1970), (1982a), (1982b); Squillante Saccone (1985); Plaza (2009) 1–10 relate the history of scholarship. Grimes (1972); Sullivan (1972); Rudd (1976); Connor (1988) explore formal and thematic elements of the *Satires*. Dessen (1968); Bramble (1974); Morford (1984); Hooley (1997); Reckford (2009) are important book-length studies of Persius in English. See also Bellandi (1996) in Italian. A selection of influential articles appears in Plaza (2009). Braund (1992) 33–9 and Hooley (2007) 87–111 provide engaging and fluid introductions; see also the outmoded, but thorough, Coffey (1976) 98–118. Cucchiarelli (2005) masterfully summarizes the central themes, including Persius' relationship to Horace, his Stoicism, and his notion of freedom. (See also Colish (1990) 194–203 on Persius' Stoicism and Tzounakas (2005) on his relationship to his predecessors.) Sullivan (1978); Sullivan (1985) 74–114; Gowers (1993a) 180–88, (1994); Freudenburg (2001) 125–208 offer insight into the political and cultural contexts. In addition to Gowers (1993a) 180–88, (1994), Reckford (1998) and D'Alessandro Behr (2005) should be consulted on corporeal imagery. On Persius' didacticism, see Henderson (1991) and Malamud (1996). On Persius' teacher Cornutus, see Most (1989).

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CHAPTER 16

Columella, *De Re Rustica*

Christiane Reitz

Background

In classical philology, there is no such thing as a barrier between literary and technical writing. All written material is the subject of philological research. In recent years, there has been a revival of interest in the methods of preservation and transmission of practical, as well as theoretical, knowledge. "Fachschriften," i.e. technical writing, is nowadays seen as a window into the way a society approaches its cultural heritage and store of experience. Theoretical studies, such as M. Asper's book on Greek scientific texts (2007) and T. Fögen's study of self-fashioning in technical writing in the early Roman empire (2009), provide insightful introductions for anyone interested in the communicative structures underlying these instructional texts. M. Fuhrmann's study and the collection edited by W. Kullmann are important earlier contributions (Fuhrmann (1960); Kullmann et al. (1998)).

Within Neronian literature, two important texts survive from this wide field of instructional technical literature: the elder Pliny's encyclopaedia, *Natural History* (see Doody in this volume), and Columella's work on agriculture. Whereas Pliny claims to collect and present knowledge about nature in the broadest possible terms and to draw on all the sources available to him, Columella selects a narrower thematic area for his work. He nonetheless has high aspirations, for agriculture is fundamental to Roman society and the Roman self-image. From the earliest times, Roman historians pictured their figures of moral authority as part-time politicians whose true and main occupation was the cultivation of their land. Cincinnatus, called to duty from behind his plough, is a famous example (Livy 3.26). Although they lived in one of the greatest urban

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agglomerations of the ancient world, many Roman citizens chose to present themselves as preferring the country and its activities over the bustle of Rome. The knowledge of farming, planting, harvesting, breeding cattle, and providing the necessities of life for a large family is a part of this prized country life. An example of this attitude from a slightly later period are the letters of the younger Pliny, nephew of the author of the encyclopedia mentioned above. We do not know if his pose as a gentleman-farmer is merely self-fashioning or is based on genuine knowledge of running a large estate; nor is it important. What is important is that Roman society, even in its most developed stage, sincerely regarded itself as founded on the agricultural skills and traditions it inherited from its forefathers, the *maiores*. When Columella writes *De Re Rustica* (''On Agriculture''), he is dealing with a central preoccupation of the educated Roman reader.

Columella – The Author

In the first century AD, the secure rule of the Roman empire extended not only over the Apennine peninsula, but also over Gaul, Hispania, and Asia. Many authors originally came from the provinces; Columella, from Hispania like Seneca and Lucan, was from Gades, today's Cadiz in Spain. He probably belonged to the equestrian order. His family and biography are known only from what we can extract from his work. He does not mention his parents, but refers to a brother of his father named Marcus Columella. This uncle is on various occasions quoted as an authority on the practice of farming. Nor do we know where or how Columella was educated, but the language and structure of his work make it plausible that he received a very thorough and formal – and that means rhetorical – education. He himself mentions a stay in Syria and Cilicia. From an inscription in honor of a tribune named Columella (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (CIL) IX 234), we may infer that he was a military tribune to the sixth legion (called Ferrata), which was stationed in that area from AD 23. This inscription is the only evidence for his full name, Lucius Iunius Moderatus Columella, and for the approximate dates of his life. On the basis of the quotations from other authors within the work, W. Richter plausibly argues that Columella was born around AD 4 and died around AD 70.

The dedicatee of the work is one P. Silvinus, apparently a neighbor of Columella's on his estate at Caere, north of Rome. Other contemporaries mentioned are Gallio (see below), Seneca the Younger (d. AD 65), and a certain Marcus Trebellius, who may be the same person as a military man active in Cilicia around AD 36.

Of his own works, Columella mentions his instructions (*praecepta*) on agriculture, and a work on weather signs of which nothing is preserved today. Another much shorter work with the title ''About Trees'' (*Liber de arboribus*) is transmitted in the same manuscript tradition and could perhaps be an epitome, i.e. an abbreviated version, of the corresponding parts of *De Re Rustica*, or else the work of a later author drawing heavily on Columella. This condensed version was dedicated to a person called Eprius Marcellus.

Genre

Agriculture is one of the most prominent and important topics in Roman literature. None other than the influential political and military leader at the time of the Punic

wars, Marcus Porcius Cato Censorius (239–141 BC) was the author of a treatise on agriculture. This is the first prose work in Roman literature that has survived to the present day. Cato's work is no anthology of farmers' adages, but a set of serious and detailed instructions on how to run a specialized and economically rewarding agricultural enterprise. The structure of Cato's work is less than transparent, but the author's personal commitment and experience are clear. Already with Cato there is no strict adherence to the ideal of the Roman landowner living and working on his land all year round. The economic aspects of agriculture are evident already in the Republican period, and farming as a business in which the owner, the *dominus*, is mainly occupied by other matters in politics, and relies on the skills of his manager, the *vilicus*, is already the dominant practice. Many other works on the same subject appeared subsequently. Today these survive in various degrees of preservation, some as mere titles, others still extant in full. The most important and influential are by Varro (M. Terentius Varro Reatinus, 116–27 BC, *Rerum Rusticarum Libri Tres*) and Palladius (Rutilius Taurus Aemilianus Palladius, fourth century AD, *Opus Agriculturae*). Columella mentions his predecessors and sources in agricultural writing in the proem (see below). One of the main authorities was a handbook by the Carthaginian author Mago, whose work in 28 books had been translated into Latin as early as 146 BC by decree of the Roman Senate. Both the original and the Latin version have been lost, but they are often cited by later authors.

On the other hand, there is also a strong tradition of poetical instruction about agriculture. Virgil's *Georgics* (written between 39 and 29 BC) are the most prominent Latin example. Virgil himself builds on a long tradition of didactic poetry, with Hesiod's *Works and Days* (before 700 BC), a poem of about 828 hexameters, as the archetype of the genre.

Work

The manuscript tradition

The tradition falls into two groups. The oldest manuscript is the Codex Sangermanensis Petropolitanus 207 (= S), a manuscript dating from the ninth century, written apparently at Corbie (France), then transferred to the Abbey of St. Germain des Prés (hence the denomination Sangermanensis), and now in the State Library at St. Petersburg. Another manuscript, probably written at Fulda (Germany), is now in the Ambrosian Library in Milan, the ninth- or tenth-century Codex Ambrosianus L 85 sup. (= A). It is closely related to S. The other group consists of more than 20 manuscripts dating from the fifteenth century which probably all descend from a manuscript that was once in the possession of the Italian humanist Poggio Bracciolini (1380–1459). This tradition is referred to in the critical editions as R. The *editio princeps*, the first modern edition after the introduction of printing, appeared in Venice in 1472 (edited by Georgius Merula and printed by Nicolas Jenson), together with editions of Cato, Varro, and Palladius. Many editions followed. Important modern editions are Lundström et al. (1896–1968), the Latin–English Loeb edition (Ash (1941), Forster and Heffner (1954, 1955)), a Latin–German edition by W. Richter (1981–3), and the recent Oxford Classical Text by R. H. Rodgers (2010).

Structure

Columella draws on both traditions of agricultural writing, the poetical and the prosaic. The work contains prose and verse sections. It opens with an extended proem and then in nine books deals with the cultivation of the land, the most important installations on a farm, crops, vegetables, and wine-growing. Some remarks on terrain for wine-growing in the provinces follow. Next come trees and information about the role that trees play in raising the vines. The second part of the work is dedicated to stock-rearing. Columella organizes his material by proceeding from large to small domestic animals. After that we learn about poultry, fish, and bee-keeping. Last comes the tenth book on horticulture. This tenth book is composed as a poem of 436 hexameters. This fact must be viewed against the literary background: in the *Georgics*, Virgil, on the brink of treating gardening extensively, calls himself to order and gives only a very short outline of what a treatment of horticulture (*hortos . . . cura colendi*, 4.118) should include (4.116–148). The Augustan poet then explicitly excludes a fuller treatment of this topic:

> verum haec ipse equidem spatiis exclusus iniquis
> praetereo atque aliis post me memoranda relinquo
>
> But I have to forego this [sc. horticulture] because of the inadequacy of space and leave it for others to discuss after me. (Virgil, *Georgics* 4.147–8)

So Columella – or any other follower of Virgil writing on agriculture – can feel legitimized in his task of writing poetry on the topic of gardening.

A schematic overview of the structure of *De Re Rustica* follows:

Preface		
Cultivation of the land	1–5	
Furnishings of the estate		1
Crops and vegetables		2
Wine		3–4
The vineyard		5.1–5
the treatment of grapes		
additional information		
Trees and wine-growing with trees		5.6–12
Animals	6–9	
large animals		6
small animals		7
poultry and fish		8
game and bees		9
Didactic poem on horticulture	10	
Duties of the manager of the estate (*vilicus*)	11	
and more details on horticulture		
Duties of the *vilica*	12	

This structure is systematic, well ordered, and transparent. Even when the overall order is occasionally interrupted by the treatment of a subject outside the general sequence, there are always thematic connections between the individual parts. The didactic poem on horticulture forms the culmination of the whole work. It is an attractive climax – if we accept the theory that the last two books (11 and 12) are a later addition. This thesis, proposed by W. Richter, among others, is quite probable: the duties and calendar for the manager and the additional instructions about gardening, and the twelfth book on the duties of the female manager (*vilica*), together with a collection of recipes, give the impression of being an afterthought.

Poetry in the midst of prose

Columella is certainly an innovator in his insertion of a didactic poem of some 400 verses into his prose treatise. Though certain genres, like Menippean satire, traditionally consisted of a mixture of prose and poetry, their technique differs considerably. In Latin Menippean satire, as far as we can judge from texts like Petronius' *Satyricon* and later examples like Boethius' *Consolatio Philosophiae*, single verses or short poems within the prose text seem to convey a certain impromptu character. A further difference is that Columella uses quotations from poetry throughout his work, mainly from Virgil's *Georgics* and from a Latin translation of Hesiod. However, the main feature specific to Columella is that his work combines the long, elegantly stylized prose text with an elaborate didactic poem that is an integral part of the overall structure of the *De Re Rustica*. In principle, and in the literary tradition, technical writing and didactic poetry belong to different spheres of instruction and to different didactic concepts. The prose treatise, like most of writing produced in Roman society, may of course bear traces of rhetorical education and formation, but it presents itself as an objective text in which the author disappears behind his subject matter. Didactic poetry, on the other hand, has to restrict itself both in terminology – for metrical reasons – and in the amount of detail treated; the tradition of the genre demands conceptual simplicity (up to a certain point), variety in discursive strategies, and some light relief between serious argumentative passages, e.g. by the insertion of mythological narrative or vivid imagery. In didactic poetry, the dialogue between teacher and pupil is always in evidence, both in the overall structure and in details like the personal address and the admonition of the teacher to his addressee.

We do not even know whether didactic poetry was considered to be a separate genre from narrative epic poetry in antiquity. However, Columella's links to the didactic tradition are very visible when he presents himself as the successor of Virgil's *Georgics.* What reasons should we assume lie behind this experiment in genre?

In the passage connecting the ninth and tenth books, Columella addresses not only the dedicatee Publius Silvinus, but also a man called Gallio (*nostro Gallioni*, 9.15.2). Most probably, he is the elder brother of Seneca the Younger. This Gallio, after his adoption by the famous orator L. Iunius Gallio, took the name of his adoptive parent. This plausible assumption not only helps to date the work, but also makes it reasonably

certain that Columella – while so fond of rustic life – was a member of the sophisticated circle which mixed with the emperor's entourage.

It is unclear whether Columella's own claims can be taken literally when he insists, in the proem (10, preface 3) and again later (11.1.2), that the poem was only included in the work because his friend Silvinus urged him to do so. Possibly this is also an imitation of Virgil: just as Virgil claimed he was following the demands of his addressee Maecenas (Virgil, *Georgics* 3.41: *sequamur /… tua, Maecenas, haud mollia iussa*), so Columella heeds Silvinus' advice:

> …isque, sicut institueram, prosa oratione prioribus subnecteretur exordiis, nisi propositum meum expugnasset frequens postulatio tua, quae praecepit ut poeticis numeris explerem Georgici carminis omissas partis, quas tamen et ipse Vergilius significaverat posteris se memorandas relinquere.
>
> …and I should be adding it in prose to my earlier books, as I had intended to do, had not your repeated appeals overruled my resolve and charged me to complete in poetic numbers those parts of the *Georgics* which were omitted by Virgil and which, as he himself had intimated, he left to be dealt with by later writers. (10, preface 3, trans. Forster and Heffner)

This line of argument is taken up again in the metrical proem:

> Hortorum quoque te cultus, Silvine, docebo,
> atque ea quae quondam spatiis exclusus iniquis,
> cum caneret laetas segetes et munera Bacchi,
> et te, magna Pales, necnon caelestia mella,
> Vergilius nobis post se memoranda reliquit.
>
> The cult of garden-plots I now will teach,
> Silvinus, and those themes which Vergil left
> For future bards, when, closed in narrow bounds,
> He sang of joyous crops and Bacchus' gifts
> And thee great Pales and Heaven's boon of honey.
> (10.1–5, trans. Forster and Heffner)

In the context of imitation of Virgil, the change of genre within Columella's work might be interpreted as follows: Virgil, in the fourth book of his *Georgics*, heightens the didactic mode in the direction of mythological epic by including the Aristaeus epyllion. In this short epic tale of the fate of Orpheus and Eurydice, the reader is given the rather complicated aetiological background to the death and rebirth of the herdsman Aristaeus' bees. The same technique, but at a lower level in the hierarchy of genres, is adopted by Columella when he raises the tone of his agricultural treatise by including a passage of epic-didactic poetry.

Columella lets the reader know in every line that he is writing from his own experience and on the basis of knowledge he has acquired himself. At the same time, however, through his stylistic and rhetorical refinement, and by the careful use of literary sources, he aims to win the appreciation of his educated readers.

Structure of* De Re Rustica *10

The structure of the poem is pragmatic and is principally oriented around the course of the year.

I	Introduction (1–40)
	proem; location of the garden; the soil; watering; fencing
	invocation of the muse: announcement of the poetic plan
II	Autumn and winter (41–76)
	working of the soil, watering
III	Spring (77–214)
	fertilizing; what to plant, care of the seedlings, watering (77–195)
	praise of springtime (196–214)
IV	(Inserted theme:) Columella and epic poetry (215–29)
V	Spring: next period of planting, flowers (230–54)
	praise of the divinities of nature (255–310)
VI	Summer (311–99)
	harvesting vegetables; protecting the garden from pests and hail;
	desirable and undesirable plants
VII	Late summer (400–32): fruit and wine-grapes
VIII	(Summary:) reference to Hesiod and Virgil (433–6)

Sources

There is no certainty about which sources Columella used, either for his didactic poem or for the work as a whole. In the proem, and again later, he cites Punic, Greek, and Roman authors on agriculture. The Punic authors are not named (1.1.6), but Mago is later mentioned explicitly as the "father of husbandry" (*rusticationem parentem maxime veneremus*, 1.1.13). The list of Greek authors (1.1.7–11) begins with Hesiod and classifies the writers by their geographical origin. This procedure is comparable to the list given by Varro (in *De Re Rustica* 1.1.8–9). The list of Roman authors starts with Cato as the main authority and then lists nine writers and their special contributions. The development of Roman agricultural writing is described metaphorically as the education of a pupil gradually attaining Roman citizenship; the learning process progresses from the pure knowledge of the Latin language (*agricolationem . . .* [*Cato*] *Latine loqui primus instituit*), via a deeper understanding ([*duo Sisennae, pater et filius*] *diligentius eruditverunt*) and rhetorical training ([*M. Terentius Varro*] *expolivit*). Agriculture's education also includes poetry ([*Vergilium*] *qui carminum quoque potentem fecit*), and needs a professional teacher ([*Iulius Hyginus*] *paedagogus*). Columella then returns from metaphorical language to a more sober style when he mentions Cornelius Celsus and Iulius Atticus, writers of his own time. Celsus is known to us as the author of a medical treatise; Iulius Atticus is quite often quoted by Columella. The last in the list is Iulius Craecinus, of whose work nothing remains.

Sources seem to have been rare for gardening, the subject of the tenth book. Pliny (*Natural History* 19.117) mentions some authors of *Kepurika* (from Greek *kepos*,

garden), but the subject of horticulture does not seem to have been a prominent topic in works on husbandry. Consequently, when Columella engages with his sources, he is both building on the established authorities and also tackling new subjects.

Columella quotes and carefully evaluates his written sources throughout the work. He discusses different opinions on individual subjects and makes it very clear that he is not blindly following authorities, but has other sources of information and hence is well able to reach his own conclusions. Fögen (2009: 177) has convincingly shown that Greek and Roman sources are quoted in more or less the same way, and Columella is not suspicious or hostile towards Greek authors, Greek terminology, or Greek knowledge in the way that, for example, Varro or Pliny the Elder were. By quoting and discussing a great variety of written material, and by interspersing his argument with the occasional poetic quotation, Columella fashions himself as a "learned farmer" (*agricola doctus*) whose work can rank with written treatises on other fields of knowledge, like oratory, science, or even dancing and singing (1, preface 2–5).

However, his own practical experience was for him equally important as a basis for instruction. Columella frequently draws on his own expertise and on the knowledge he acquired through being taught by his uncle Marcus Columella. As a result, Columella appears to his reader as a person who can be trusted not only for his intellectual capacities and his learning, but also for his thorough and longstanding practical experience in the field.

Style

Columella writes in an elegant Latin prose, but some colloquialisms and unclassical usages have also been noted. The subject matter is carefully organized, not only, as we have already seen, on the larger scale of structure, but also in the course of the argument. He helps and guides his readers as they work through the text. Discussions of single points are never drawn out at length; Columella stresses the concept of finding just the right amount of detail. By using a consistent terminology for structural aspects of the work – like a skilled orator before an audience – the author lays bare his strategy for organizing the material. "Signposting" formulae like *haec hactenus – nunc superest* ("enough has been said about this – it now remains . . . ") are very frequent. They not only function as structuring elements, but also impart a sense of the author's skilful choice and treatment of these huge masses of material. He does not shy away from using the exact and appropriate technical terminology, even if that makes it necessary to introduce Greek words and terms in some cases. The language is always pleasant, the sentences well balanced and, especially when speaking on more general subjects, as in the proem, even of a high rhetorical standard.

In the poem, Columella demonstrates that he is an up-to-date poet. Its lucid structure, the large amount of information it conveys, and its concentration in length make it a fine piece of didactic poetry; the brevity itself, its modesty regarding the poet's own merits compared to the great Virgil, and some hints of the poetological terminology of Romanized Hellenistic poetry all testify to the author's poetic ambition. Vivid images make visible to the reader the flowering of the well-cultivated garden before her inner eye. Flowers are called "stars on earth," *terrestria sidera*, but they also have

human traits – they have eyes, hair, a little mouth. Colors play an important part in the descriptions. In the 436 verses, 53 different descriptions of color occur (see Saint-Denis (1969) preface). The use of personifications, mythological allusions, and Greek names is not simply putting on a display of learning, but points up the importance of the subject matter. The author is always serious about his didactic program. An example of this may be the exhortation by Calliope (10.225–9). She earnestly calls the poet back to his topic after he has been elaborately praising the spring.

The continuous dialogue between author and dedicatee, and, on a less overt level, between author and reader, is an important feature of the work. On several occasions, Columella hints at his practice of discussing parts of his work with experts before deciding on the final version. He thus shows that he is an open-minded person whose main aim is to produce a useful book that is easy to use and that occasionally may even take the place of the traditional oral instruction of previous eras.

Mos Maiorum and Columella's Contemporary Readers

Though Columella dwells on tradition and moral values and persistently warns against practices in rural life that he deems too modern, he is nonetheless writing for a contemporary audience. The husbandry that Columella has in mind is not nostalgic. It relies on the complex processes that characterize the functioning of a large villa. It would only be possible to direct a large agricultural enterprise such as that owned by his intended readers by using well-trained slaves in large numbers and by applying strict and knowledgeable administrative practices. The farming business presupposed by the text might comprise very extensive estates, but not specialized enterprises with boring monocultures. Columella encourages his Roman and Italian readership to trust in the fruitful soil of their Italian home country and recommends variety as the principle of running a farm. Italian soil is well suited to growing corn, fruit, wine, cattle, and so on. This variety will finally prove not only useful and economically sound, but also consistent with traditional social and political values. Columella is not a moralizing critic of his own times. The well-known discourse on luxury (as we know it, for example, from Sallust) is sometimes present, but it does not play an important role. We should not expect from Columella a moral or social critique, either conservative or revolutionary, but a well-informed and sympathetic voice which speaks for his own class and his own times.

Two examples

Columella's clearly organized style and his strategy for giving comprehensible, full, and practical advice, can be illustrated by a characteristic passage. In the seventh book, Columella deals with small animals: donkeys, sheep, goats and pigs. He discusses breeding, upkeep, and treating illnesses. Within the passage on keeping goats, brief instructions on cheese-making are inserted. Remarks on dogs form the conclusion of the book (7.12–13).

De armentis ceterisque pecudibus et magistris, per quos quadripedum greges humana sollertia domi forisque curantur atque observantur, nisi fallor, satis accurate disserui. nunc ut exordio priore sum pollicitus, de mutis custodibus loquar, quamquam falso canis dicitur mutus custos. nam quis hominum clarius aut tanta vociferatione bestiam vel furem praedicat quam iste latratu, quis famulus amantior domini, quis fidelior comes, quis custos incorruptior, quis excubitor inveniri potest vigilantior, quis denique ultor aut vindex constantior? quare vel in primis hoc animal mercari tuerique debet agricola, quod et villam et fructus familiamque et pecora custodit. eius autem parandi tuendique triplex ratio est. namque unum genus adversus hominum insidias eligitur et id villam quaeque iuncta sunt villae custodit, at alterum propellendis iniuriis hominum ac ferarum, et id observat domi stabulum, foris pecora pascentia; tertium venandi gratia conparatur idque non solum nihil agricolam iuvat, sed et avocat desidemque ab opere suo reddit. de villatico igitur et pastorali dicendum est, nam venaticus nihil pertinet ad nostram professionem.

I have now, unless I am mistaken, dealt in sufficient detail with animals used for ploughing and other cattle and with the herdsmen who are employed to look after and watch over flocks of four-footed animals at home and out of doors with all the resources of human intelligence. Now, as I promised in the earlier part of my treatise, I will speak of the dumb guardians of the flocks, though it is wrong to speak of the dog as a dumb guardian; for what human being more clearly or so vociferously gives warning of the presence of a wild beast or of a thief as does the dog by its barking? What servant is more attached to his master than is a dog? What companion more faithful? What guardian more incorruptible? What more wakeful night-watchman can be found? Lastly, what more steadfast avenger or defender? To buy and keep a dog ought, therefore, to be among the first things which a farmer does, because it is the guardian of the farm, its produce, the household and the cattle. There are three different reasons for procuring and keeping a dog. One type of dog is chosen to oppose the plots of human beings and watches over the farm and all its appurtenances; a second kind for repelling the attacks of men and wild beasts and keeping an eye at home on the stables and abroad on the flocks as they feed; the third kind is acquired for the purposes of the chase, and not only does not help the farmer but actually lures him away for his work and makes him lazy about it. We must, therefore, speak of the farm-yard dog and the sheep-dog; for the sporting hound has nothing to do with the art which we profess. (Columella, *De Re Rustica* 7.12, trans. Forster and Heffner)

How does the author proceed here? First, the previous discussion is briefly summarized and the new topic is introduced. Then follow the reasons why dogs should be mentioned at all: their fine character and their usefulness. This reasoning starts from the common opinion about the dog as a "dumb guardian." This opinion is shown to be nonsensical, because the dog's barking plays an important part in guarding the farm. Next follows a series of rhetorical questions, developed as anaphora, with each element introduced with *quis*, and highlighted by homoioteleuta that give emphasis to the comparatives (*amantior, fidelior, incorruptior, vigilantior, constantior*) at the ends of the sentences. This highly rhetorical brief praise of man's best friend has made clear the importance of the topic and its impact on the overall subject matter of good husbandry. The reader has been put in an attentive and positive mood, his interest awakened, and so he is ready for what now follows: rather sober and technical instructions on the different uses of dogs. There are three different areas in which a dog is employed: keeping guard, repelling attacks, and hunting. The practical purpose – to guard the farm and keep an eye on stables and flocks (*villam custodire; stabulum et pecora observare*) – is in

two cases combined with a more theoretical, almost teleological observation: the dog as alarm against human ambushes and as instrument for repelling the attacks of men and wild beasts ([*canis*] *eligitur adversus insidias hominum, ad propellendum iniuriis hominum ac ferarum*.) The third type of employment – hunting – is not given a more general characterization, i.e. an explanation of its purpose in the living organism of the farm. This type is acquired merely for hunting (*venandi gratia*) and is not useful, but on the contrary is a harmful dissipation of resources and a temptation for the farmer to neglect his duties. In this short passage the reader is provided with information and with a deeper understanding of the underlying goals of the farmer's activities. At the same time, he will enjoy the rhetorical neatness and dry humor with which the point is made. He will now feel well prepared for the following, more detailed instructions.

Another example illustrates the poetic skill and interest that lies in the combination of surprising subject matter and stylistic devices. The topic is the gardener's worst enemy, pests. Everybody who has ever worked in a garden knows how devastating it can be to see the results of hard labor entirely devoured by snails. How is it possible to put this into verse?

The passage is preceded by an admonition to take care to cultivate the soil regularly. Ants and ground fleas should be demoralized by diligent digging and tamping of the flower and vegetable beds. But there are even more enemies:

> nec solum teneras audent erodere frondes
> implicitus conchae limax hirsutaque campe,
> sed cum iam valido pinguescit lurida caule
> brassica cumque tument pallentia robora betae
> mercibus atque holitor gaudet securus adultis
> et iam maturis quaerit supponere falcem,
> saepe ferus duros iaculatur Iuppiter imbres,
> grandine dilapidans hominumque boumque labores;
> saepe etiam gravidis inrorat pestifer undis.
> e quibus infestae Baccho glaucisque salictis
> nascuntur volucrae serpitque eruca per herbas,
> quo super ingrediens exurit semina morsu;
> quae capitis viduata comas spoliataque nudo
> vertica trunca iacent tristi consumpta veneno.

> For not alone the snail, wrapped in its shell, and hairy caterpillar dare to gnaw the tender leaves, but, when on solid stalk, the yellow cabbage now begins to swell and beet's pale stems increase and, free from care, the gardener in his rich, ripe merchandise rejoices, ready to put in the knife, oft-times fierce Jove, launching his cruel showers, lays waste with hail the toils of man and beast, oft too his rain, pregnant with pestilence, bedews the earth, whence flying creatures breed, foes of the vine and the grey thickets, and, creeping through the garden, canker-worms bite and dry up the seedlings, as they go, which, of their leaves bereft, with naked tops, consumed by baneful wastage, ruined lie. (Columella, *De Re Rustica* 10. 323–36, trans. Forster and Heffner).

The descriptions ring true as genuine expertise: the different kinds of pests are named specifically, the useful plants are enumerated. However, the short passage is not only

characterized by the amount of fact and detail – the reader is also induced to sympathize. The snails bring their attack forward in two waves: on young and again on mature vegetables. The gardener may never feel safe; after countering the attack of the snails, he has to beware of other dangers, e.g. the weather. A rainstorm that a farmer has to watch in helpless distress is an everyday experience, but at the same time this is a motif which the well-read reader may know and recognize from other contexts. A thunderstorm is a traditional simile in battle descriptions. One example is Apollonius Rhodius in *Argonautica* 3.1399. In the finale of the third book of the epic, Aeetes has to watch as Jason slays his earthborn warriors; the thunderstorm is a simile for his defeat and Aeetes, the defeated, is compared to a grieving and helpless farmer who sees himself cheated of the reward for his hard work. In Columella, the epic simile has become the central argument. More often than not, the diligent gardener simply has to endure the bad weather that destroys his plants and he is condemned to watch helplessly as the fruit of his efforts vanishes. This situation elicits the pity both of the author and the reader. The plants are described using metaphors from human life: *viduata, coma, nudo*. Nature proves unpredictable and even evil (*duros, pestifer, tristi*). To grow plants requires a battle in which the enemy is given to cruelty and ruthlessness (*exurit, morsu, dilapidans, spoliata*). The whole line of argument is packed into one long period. By this device it becomes even more apparent that the events described are ineluctable down to the bitter end. This is accentuated not only by the syntax, but also by the style, especially the phonological patterns within the passage: alliteration of v- and tr- in chiastic order make it clear that this gardening idyll, when observed carefully, is in fact an heroic epic in miniature.

Reception

Columella was regarded as an authority on agriculture both in antiquity and later. He is quoted by Pliny, by Palladius (author of a work also called *De Re Rustica*, dating from the fourth century AD) and by authors who wrote on veterinary subjects in late antiquity. In the early Middle Ages, Cassiodorus (*c.* AD 490–580, author of, among other things, an encyclopedic and educational work called *Institutiones Divinarum et Saecularium Litterarum*) and Isidore of Seville (*c.* AD 560–636, author of the *Etymologiae*) knew and valued the *De Re Rustica*. The high level of appreciation that the work later enjoyed is evident from the large number of Renaissance manuscripts of the text. Claudia Schindler has just provided a comprehensive overview of Columella's reception up to our time. Of special interest is his fate in the context of education and school teaching. It appears that the *De Re Rustica* served as a source book for communist critique on Roman society. On the other hand, in a novel by the Tunisian author Fawzi Mellah (1988) Columella and the use he presumably made of his Carthaginian predecessor Mago are seen as symbols for European colonialism. So the close link between agriculture and ideology continues to be one important aspect for his readers and interpreters, from Columella's own era until our time. But certainly, he merits to be read and enjoyed for many reasons.

FURTHER READING

In English, White (1970) is still fundamental for understanding the mechanics of Roman farming; on Columella within the "gardening literature" tradition, see esp. Gowers (2000); Henderson (2002) and (2004); Doody (2007). Spencer (2010) looks at Columella's political and ideological message. Christmann (2010) offers valuable material. In Italian Boldrer (1996), a commentary on book 10, and in German Diederich (2005 and 2007) as well as Fögen (2009) are important studies. Asper (2007) looks at Greek technical writing, Schindler (2010) at Columella's reception.

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CHAPTER 17

Literature of the World: Seneca's *Natural Questions* and Pliny's *Natural History*

Aude Doody

Dedicated and published within 15 years of each other, Seneca and Pliny's work on nature stand as markers for a Roman sense of how the world works. Seneca's *Natural Questions* can be dated to AD 62 or 63 on the basis of his references to the Campanian earthquake (6.1) and may have been the product of his increased leisure after his retreat from public life in AD 62, following the death of Burrus. The *Natural History* was presented to its addressee, Titus, in AD 77; the last of Pliny's works to be published, it seems to have been composed in the 70s during the period in which he returned to public life under Vespasian, but may have drawn on notes begun much earlier and gathered over the course of a long career (Baldwin (1995)). Though very different in scope and structure, the two works share a conception of nature that draws on Stoic philosophy, and an interest in how human beings should relate to and make use of the natural world (Inwood (2005); Beagon (1992) 26–54). Published on either side of Nero's death, they present very different accounts of the emperor and his interest in research into nature, most particularly his famous sponsorship of an expedition to find the source of the Nile. Together, their writing about the natural world provide insights into how nature could be viewed as a source of both inspiration and practical resources, and set in broad perspective the power of the Roman empire and the relationship between emperor and the world he claims to control (Hine (2006); Murphy (2004)).

Roman Writing about Nature

Seneca's *Natural Questions*, Pliny's *Natural History* and Lucretius' *On the Nature of Things* represent the most important surviving texts from a Roman tradition of writing about nature. This Roman tradition, however, is indebted to Greek sources, where in

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each case the Roman writer sifts through, reinvents, and stamps his authority on ideas and information derived from older scholarship. In the case of Lucretius, the text makes poetry from the theories of Epicurus, the founder of Epicureanism, who believed the physical world to be made up of matter and void. In the case of Seneca and Pliny, the underlying philosophical tradition is Stoicism, but their modes of writing are very different. In Seneca's case, Stoic philosophical positions are explicitly advanced, discussed, and defended: throughout the work, Seneca identifies with Stoic positions by referring to those advancing them as *nostri*, "our people." Pliny, however, does not appear interested in advancing a positive theoretical position or in engaging in philosophical debates: although we can see the influence of Stoic thought implicit in his conception of nature, Pliny's concern is with discrete, concrete facts about observable things in the world around him (Doody (2010) 23–30). Seneca's *Natural Questions*, or *Research on Nature*, is discursive, laying out philosophical problems and engaging in debate on specific issues; Pliny's *Natural History* is structured around hierarchical lists of places, people, animals, plants, medicines, and minerals, albeit with plenty of scope for rhetorical digressions and points of interest. Where Seneca tries to explain the reasons why things are the way they are, Pliny is more concerned to tell the reader what things exist and what can be done with them. What the two works share is a concern with the relationship of people to nature and a sense of the importance of living in accordance with nature.

The *Natural Questions* is traditionally divided into seven books, the contents of which are as follows:

Book 1	Rainbows, meteors and other lights or fires in the sky
Book 2	Thunder and lightning
Book 3	Seas
Book 4a	The Nile
Book 4b	Hail and snow
Book 5	Winds
Book 6	Earthquakes
Book 7	Comets

Although some of the manuscripts present book 4 as a unified whole, it actually represents fragments of what were originally two separate books on quite different topics: the beginning of a book on the Nile, a river important and singular enough to merit its own section, and the end of a book that dealt with rain, hail, and snow. The traditional ordering is also almost certainly wrong: based on analysis of the text's manuscripts and on internal evidence, scholars believe that book 3 was originally the first book in the series, followed by 4a, 4b, 5, 6, 7, making books 1 and 2 the last two in the work as we have it, but Harry Hine's recent translation is the only edition to present the books in this order (Hine (2010); see Codoñer Merino (1979) xx–xxi; Hine (1981) 4–23). Although the preface to book 3 reads like the beginning of a work, there is nothing in book 2 to suggest that it was meant as the end, and so it is possible that further books were written or planned. The work is addressed to Lucilius, the poet, who Seneca tells us was then a procurator in Sicily (4a preface 1).

As it stands, for a modern reader Seneca's work might seem to cover an odd array of natural phenomena, from meteors to rivers to earthquakes, but ancient readers would have understood that the *Natural Questions* is concerned with the subject area of meteorology, which Aristotle seems to have been the first to distinguish from the study of astronomy. In addition to the study of weather, meteorology could include those natural phenomena which were thought to belong to the middle space between the earth and the heavens, including meteors and comets, but also the workings of rivers, seas, earthquakes, and volcanoes, since these were supposed to operate on similar principles and be influenced by the same forces as atmospheric phenomena (Taub (2003) 1–13). Seneca's approach is to present the views of earlier writers, named and unnamed, on a given topic, and postpone his own view until last, where typically he will side with one of the opinions he has presented earlier (Hine (2006) 56–8). This doxographical method seems to be inherited from Aristotle who adopted a similar approach in his *Meteorologica*; it demonstrates Seneca's engagement with tradition but also his ability to think critically, philosophically, about these theories in forming his own conclusions (Hall (1977); Inwood (2005) 7–22).

Pliny's *Natural History* is in many ways a more ambitious work than the *Natural Questions*, attempting to encompass information on all aspects of the natural world in its 37 volumes. In his preface, Pliny describes his project in quantitative terms, telling his addressee, Titus, "I have packed 20,000 things worth knowing from 100 important authors into 36 volumes, drawing on my reading of about 2,000 volumes, most of them seldom touched by scholars because of their obscure subject matter. I have thrown in many things which earlier writers did not know about, or which life has recently revealed." (*Natural History* 1 preface 17) Having gone to all the trouble of gathering together material from so many diverse sources, Pliny provides a list of contents in book 1, joking that this will allow Titus to avoid reading the whole thing (*Natural History* 1 preface 33). The contents of the 37 volumes can be grouped as follows:

Book 1	Preface, list of contents, and sources
Book 2	The world as a whole, the heavens
Book 3–6	Geography of the known world
Book 7–11	Living creatures: humans, animals, fish, birds, insects
Book 12–19	Plants
Book 20–27	Medicines derived from plants
Book 28–32	Medicines derived from living creatures
Book 33–37	Metals and minerals, including a lengthy discussion of sculpture and painting that use these as materials

Some books are more discursive than others: book 2, which deals with many of the meteorological subjects that interest Seneca, or book 18, on farming, find Pliny in expansive mode, engaging in debate and discussing earlier scholars' work, whereas books 3 and 4, on the geography of Europe, or book 37, on gemstones, are almost unreadably terse, listing names and facts at breakneck speed.

For all their differences in approach and material, both the *Natural Questions* and the *Natural History* seem to share a Stoic understanding of nature. In Stoic thought,

nature is providential and divine, a creator who has designed a rational universe for the benefit of humanity. This view of nature sees it, or perhaps Her, as immanent in the observed phenomena of the world. Nature is something to be contemplated, marveled at, but also investigated and learned from. For Seneca, virtue is the first step in a process of discovery and education which leads the Stoic to study nature and come, via inquiry into the natural world, to a greater knowledge of God (*Natural Questions* 1 preface 6–13): the mind's ability to dwell on questions about the workings of the stars allows it access to knowledge of the divine (1 preface 12–13). Studying nature helps the mind to move away from sordid matters, and helps separate the mind from the concerns of the body (3.18). The study and contemplation of nature is its own reward: it involves the student in its own magnificence (6.4.2). The individual questions that Seneca considers – how rainbows are formed, why the Nile floods in summer, and so on – are explicitly placed in the service of a broader, moral goal that is aligned with a clearly worked out philosophical position. The study of nature grants students a grand perspective from which to better understand their place in the world. It brings them closer to the Stoic ideal of a life lived in pursuit of virtue by revealing the pettiness of those aspects of day to day life that the Stoics termed "indifferents": concerns about whether a person is rich or poor, free or slave, are dwarfed by contemplation of the enormity and magnificence of nature.

Where Seneca is overtly concerned with philosophical questions, Pliny has no interest in debating or advancing a positive theoretical position on nature. His interest in collecting and presenting discrete pieces of information on the natural world aligns him most closely with Aristotle's work on animals or Theophrastus' work on plants, but, unlike these precursors, Pliny shows no inclination towards drawing up complex taxonomies or philosophical conclusions from the disparate facts he gathers. Pliny's originality in the *Natural History* lies in this conviction that to know about nature is to know a series of concrete facts – the 53 peoples who have inhabited Latium (3.68–70), the 8 types of pear with names derived from their place of origin (15.55), the 13 medicines produced from acorns (24.7), and so on. Pliny's text places humans, and specifically Romans, at the centre of a natural world that is designed for their use (French (1994) 206–7). Although some of Seneca's questions had important practical implications, such as, for instance, the vexed problem of the Nile's flooding patterns, the practical aspects are not stressed. In the *Natural History*, on the other hand, Pliny devotes a third of the work to the medicinal uses of the plants and animals he describes in their own right first, and in his treatment of minerals, examines at great length the art that has been created with them.

Elaborate philosophical debate is not necessary to Pliny's project of itemizing and cataloguing the natural world, and at no point does he define for the reader exactly what he means by "nature." From scattered passages across the work, we can see that Pliny's ideas on nature share many similarities with those of Seneca but he is no Stoic purist and no entirely cohesive position on nature emerges over the course of the *Natural History* (Beagon (1992) 26–54).

Pliny begins by asserting that the world (*mundus*) is divine, eternal, and immeasurable, both a work of nature and nature herself (*Natural History* 2.1). Nature is personified as a creator, an artist (11.1), as a mother – but also as a stepmother, following Cicero's striking formulation (7.1, Cicero, *De Re Publica* 1.3). Pliny repeatedly encourages the

reader to marvel at the wonders of nature: her playfulness in causing snakes and elephants to fight for her amusement (8.34); the subtlety of her artistry revealed in the tiniest of insects (11.4). Pliny is intrigued by the unusual and even the freakish in the natural world, and his interest in *mirabilia* provoked criticism even in antiquity: Aulus Gellius in his *Attic Nights* was the first of many scholars to critique Pliny's gullibility in following old reports of marvelous peoples (*Attic Nights* 9.4.12, 10.12.6; Holford-Strevens (2005) 165–6; Keulen (2009) 200–03; Naas (2002) 271–4). But even familiar phenomena can and should inspire wonder; Pliny's account of the natural world calls on his readers to see nature at work in each discrete fact he brings to their attention:

> In every instance the power and majesty of the nature of things is unbelievable if your mind grasps only parts of it, and not the whole thing. I need not mention the spots on peacocks, tigers, and panthers or the markings of so many other animals, a small thing to mention but a huge thing to think about – or all the different types of speech and language and ways of talking, which make a foreigner seem hardly human to someone of another race! (*Natural History* 7.7)

The *Natural History* finds a sort of unity in the author's will to astonish and the reader's willingness to be astonished (Conte (1994) 102). This attitude of astonishment produced by the contemplation of Pliny's amassed collection of natural wonders is supposed to inspire the reader towards a new appreciation of nature herself. As we will see, for Pliny no less than Seneca, this attitude towards nature has implications for how Romans should live their lives in a contemporary society that is depicted as having lost its respect for nature and the natural world.

A Moral Universe: Luxury and Extravagance at Rome

Both Seneca and Pliny situate their work on nature within a wider Roman discourse on morality and, in particular, the dangers of luxurious, extravagant living. This moral discourse in these writers' work on nature can be seen as a Roman accretion upon an essentially Greek tradition of natural philosophy; in his recent work on Seneca, B. M. Gauly sees Roman moralizing sections standing in a productive dialogue with the sections on natural phenomena that reflect an earlier, Greek mode of writing (Gauly (2004) 73–85). Diatribes against individual instances of excess and luxury occur throughout the *Natural Questions* and the *Natural History*. Seneca conjures the raptures of a dinner party over the colorful spectacle of a dying fish, a mullet held in a glass jar and passed from person to person (*Natural Questions* 3.18); he recounts in some detail the ways in which Hostius Quadra made use of magnifying mirrors during sex (1.16); he discusses the decadence of the practice of using snow to cool drinks – a practice Pliny associates with Nero (*Natural Questions* 4b.13; *Natural History* 31.40). In Pliny's work, we find, for instance, outrage at the lengths and the expense to which Romans will go to acquire pearls (9.104–23) and frankincense (12.51–65), and criticism of their increasing indulgence in silk clothes (11.76–8) and perfumes (13.20–24). Seneca's writing has been criticized for a perceived lack of integration between the moralizing

rhetorical passages that mark the beginnings and ends of each book, and the substantive discussions of natural philosophy that form the centre of the work (discussed by Berno (2003) 15–24; Gauly (2004) 53–67; Williams (2012) 54–92). Pliny too has had his share of critics who found his concern with moral questions problematic: "in our terms, Pliny is rotten rhetoric and worse science," as Andrew Wallace-Hadrill ironically put it in an article that set out to explore the cultural and intellectual contexts in which Pliny's preoccupation with luxury makes sense (Wallace-Hadrill (1990) 81). In both Seneca's and Pliny's works, nature is understood within a framework of contemporary human concerns and the proper understanding of nature has consequences for human behavior.

In Seneca's work, the examination of natural phenomena is put in the service of ethical goals: far from being simple rhetorical digressions, the passages on morality are key to Seneca's aims in writing the *Natural Questions* (Berno (2003) 15–17). The *Natural Questions* is also intimately concerned with the relationship between god and man, and the limitations on human knowledge of both god and nature (Inwood (2005) 157–200). For Seneca, contempt for luxury is linked directly to the project of studying nature, which in turn leads to a greater access to the divine. The contemplation of nature in all its immensity allows the individual to laugh at the luxury and decadence of contemporary Roman fashions for mosaic floors and ceilings paneled with ivory:

> The virtue to which we aspire is marvelous not because freedom from evil is itself wonderful, but because it releases the mind, prepares it for the knowledge of the celestial, and makes it worthy to enter into partnership with god. It has consummated and fulfilled the blessings of human destiny only when it has trampled over every evil and has sought the heights and entered the inner recesses of nature. Then, as it wanders among the stars themselves, it takes delight in laughing at the paved floors of the wealthy and at the whole world with its gold. (*Natural Questions* 1 preface 6–7, trans. Hine)

Although Pliny, as usual, does not spell out the rationale for his critique of luxury in explicit terms, the examples that he provides and the insistence with which he returns to the subject find coherence in the same moral framework that Seneca had elaborated (Wallace-Hadrill (1990) 86–7). Luxurious living is placed in opposition to the study of nature: it is wrong in itself because it goes against nature, and a symptom of a deeper lack of understanding of humans' relationship to the natural world.

For both Seneca and Pliny, nature is beneficent, providing humanity with great gifts, but these gifts are, however, open to abuse. In a passage in which he conflates providence, nature, and god as the provider of winds to humanity, Seneca wonders whether winds have done more harm than good by opening up the seas for travel, a risk usually undertaken for war or profit (*Natural Questions* 5.18.4–16). He concludes:

> If we measure nature's benefits according to the depravity of those who use them, we have received all of them to our detriment . . . . You will discover nothing of such manifest usefulness that it cannot be turned into the opposite by wrongdoing. So nature devised winds as well to do good: we ourselves have made them do the opposite. (5.18.15, trans. Hine)

This insistence on a universe ordered with humans' best interests at heart had its critics, notably among the Skeptics, and Seneca's explanation here has a somewhat defensive

tone. In Pliny's work we find occasional glimpses of a savage or cruel nature (*natura saeviens*), but the dominant model is of a providential nature, who arranges the world for the benefit of mankind (Beagon (1992) 36–42). Like Seneca, Pliny explains away potential problems, so that even poison can be seen as evidence of nature's goodness towards humans: it provides a means of suicide for those who no longer wish to live (*Natural History* 2.156). Both Seneca and Pliny construct lengthy attacks on those who misuse nature's providential gifts by excessive indulgence, reserving special rhetorical flights for those who go beyond natural boundaries by crossing the seas or by mining (on seafaring *Natural Questions* 5.18.6–10, *Natural History* 14.52, 19.3–6; mining *Natural Questions* 1.16.6, 5.15.1–4, *Natural History* 33.70–73).

In the case of Seneca, it has been suggested that the moralizing passages are not simply standard Roman rhetoric; they can also have complex, allegorical meanings which interact with their wider philosophical and literary context in Seneca's text (see Gauly (2004) 87–134). In book 1, Hostius Quadra's enjoyment in watching his own sexual exploits reflected in mirrors is vividly described in language that recalls Seneca's earlier discussion of rainbows, parhelia, and streaks as reflections of the sun (Gauly (2004) 115–34; Leitão (1998) 127–60). Hostius is criticized for his excess and for his indulgence in sexual acts that Romans thought of as unnatural: he allows himself to be penetrated by men and he performs oral sex on a woman (Walters (1998) 361). Within the framework of Roman moral discourse, Hostius Quadra is monstrous (Citroni Marchetti (1991) 156), and Berno has suggested continuities between the depiction of Hostius here and similarly transgressive figures in Senecan tragedy (Berno (2003) 55–61). Seneca's detailed description, however, wallowing in the scandalous detail, shows an ambivalent fascination; in Leitão's provocative reading, the multiple, fractured reflections of Hostius' body take on symbolic meaning within the broader context of book 1's concern with earthly reflections of heavenly phenomena, so that it becomes "an emblem of cosmic dissolution, and of natural philosophy's promise of regeneration" (Leitão (1998) 152). From a different perspective, the passage has been seen as a fable on the project of philosophical self-knowledge (Bartsch (2006) 106–13) and the nature of the interlocutor Seneca addresses in his text (Williams (2005) 145–52). At the least, Seneca seems to luxuriate in the telling of the story in such a way as to provoke as well as instruct his readers.

In the *Natural History* too, Pliny's didactic aims in critiquing luxury can seem to be undercut by the ways in which these critiques are used to enliven the narrative. As with Seneca, the extended attacks on Roman morality tend to cluster at the beginnings and endings of books, but anecdotes and exclamations surface periodically throughout the work. More surprisingly perhaps, Pliny also uses Roman standards of luxury as an organizing principle in his section on metals and minerals, beginning with gold, followed by silver in book 33, and listing gemstones in order of their value in book 37. Pliny's attitude towards luxury is complicated by his emphasis on the uses to which Romans can put the products of nature: his *Natural History* includes many products of human creativity, including artworks that have both monetary and artistic value. Pliny includes prices for luxury goods and detailed descriptions of the processes involved in manufacturing such expensive products as purple (*Natural History* 9.133): "Pliny accepts the manufacture of luxuries in actual life as a means of making a living. Moral outrage is tempered by business considerations." (Beagon (1992) 77) The moral problem for Pliny

lies in the uses to which humans put their creativity: luxury inspires inventiveness, but that invention can seem to rival and pervert the creativity of nature (Citroni Marchetti (1991) 200–1, Beagon (1992) 75–9; on Seneca cf. Berno (2003) 161–2). Luxury also distracts Romans from the pursuit of a greater understanding of the natural world: at the beginning of book 14, Pliny laments the fact that the peace and prosperity brought by the empire have encouraged the pursuit of wealth rather than the pursuit of knowledge (14.1–7). In some ways Pliny's ambivalence towards including luxury items in his catalogues mirrors a Roman moral ambivalence towards the wealth resulting from their empire (Carey (2003) 77–9).

This anxiety about a decline in Roman values produced by the wealth of empire is not peculiar to Pliny, and in many ways, the critique of luxury that Seneca and Pliny present in their works is a familiar one. The idea that Rome has experienced a decline in moral values from the austere purity of the past to the decadent luxury of the present is common in Roman literature: Livy's preface to his history of Rome (*Ab Urbe Condita*), and Sallust's opening to the *Bellum Catilinae* both link this decline into luxury with the increase in wealth Rome experienced as a result of its imperial expansion (Livy 1 preface 12; Sallust *Bellum Catilinae* 11–13). Seneca himself expresses similar sentiments elsewhere (*De Ira* 1.11; *Letters* 87.41), though, as critics have pointed out since antiquity, his own enormous wealth as a friend of the emperor might make his comments on luxury appear hypocritical (Griffin (1976) 286–314). And yet Seneca is pleased to discover evidence for avarice in the past in a story he tells from Asclepiodotus of the long journey under the earth made by miners in the time of Philip of Macedon that led them to discover vast underground lakes. It is not just Romans of the present day who are prone to the pursuit of precious metals and gemstones:

> [O]ur generation is struggling with vices that are not new but are inherited from long ago . . . Those ancestors of ours whom we are constantly praising, whom we complain that we so little resemble, were led on by their hopes to hack into mountains, and stood on top of their gain, beneath their ruin. (*Natural Questions* 5.15.2, trans. Hine)

Perhaps Seneca was especially keen to see contemporary problems as nothing special to his age, given his proximity to the extravagance of the imperial court. It is the close association between Nero and luxury, at least in later minds, that adds piquancy to the critique of luxury in Seneca's text. Although both Seneca and Pliny attack what they perceive as the decadence and extravagance of contemporary life, that criticism has different resonance in the era of Nero and that of Vespasian a decade later.

Nero and the Natural World

In the 15 years between the publication of the *Natural Questions* and the *Natural History*, the political situation in Rome had changed considerably. Nero had been ousted from power, and in the civil war that followed his suicide, Vespasian had emerged as *princeps*; the *Natural History* was dedicated with some affection to Titus, then co-emperor with his father. Seneca was also dead, forced to commit suicide by Nero in AD 65. Pliny provides an elegy of sorts for him in the *Natural History*, remarking

that Seneca was "first among scholars and in power, which in the end overcame him" (*Natural History* 14.51). Where Seneca was closely associated with Nero and his court, Pliny appears to have kept a low profile during the years of Nero's Principate, only to re-emerge into prominence in public life under Vespasian (Syme (1969) 201–36). Nero is mentioned several times in both the *Natural Questions* and the *Natural History*, but while Seneca's references are overtly positive, Pliny's damning comments participate in the Flavian vilification of Nero after his death. The image of Nero that appears in these two texts can cast light both on the changing fortunes of Nero's reputation and on the relationship that could be expected between the emperor and the natural world.

In Pliny's *Natural History*, Nero is painted as a monster of extravagance and unnatural living, "an enemy of the human race" who, as Beagon puts it, represents "the antithesis of the whole humanitarian ideal of the [*Natural History*]" (7.46; Beagon (1992) 18). Nero attacks nature head on by attempting to build a canal, which is partly responsible for the destruction of a very fine vineyard (*Natural History* 4.10, 14.61); the Great Fire, which Pliny takes for granted that Nero started, wantonly destroys a 180-year-old tree (17.5). Worst of all, Nero experimented with magic, a practice that Pliny excoriates as dangerous, un-Roman and unnatural (30.14–15). In the pursuit of luxury, it is not only Nero himself but his associates who come in for criticism: Poppaea's baths in asses' milk (11.238, 28.183), his slave's use of expensive perfumes (13.22), a freedman's importation of sand from the Nile for use in wrestling (35.167), and other allusions over the course of the work build an image of Nero's court as perversely extravagant. Nero himself is particularly prominent in the sections of the *Natural History* which deal with art history, where he appears both excessive and destructive (Carey (2003) 138–76, Isager (1991) 224–6): he ruins the artistry of a beautiful marble statue by covering it with gold (34.63), and his practice of "imprisoning" statues in the Golden House is contrasted with Vespasian's presentation of artworks in public (34.84, 35.120). Pliny helps to create the powerful image of Nero's monstrous decadence that has provided a framework for later interpretations of his Principate, and the literature it produced (Elsner and Masters (1994) 1–8, and see Bergmann and Mratschek in this volume).

Seneca's political career as a close adviser of Nero provides a compelling context in which to read his works, and yet the relationship of his writing to his career is somewhat opaque. Only three of his works mention Nero by name: the *Apocolocyntosis*, where he is favorably contrasted with Claudius, the *De Clementia*, which is dedicated to the emperor, and the *Natural Questions*. In the *Natural Questions*, Seneca refers to Nero in positive terms; in book 1, for example, he approvingly quotes a line of Nero's poetry that describes the rainbow-like qualities of a pigeon's plumage (*Natural Questions* 1.5.6). It has been suggested that despite the overt praise of the emperor in the *Natural Questions*, there is an undercurrent of criticism running through the text. Seneca's denunciations of extravagances associated with Nero can be read as subversive critique of the emperor's excesses (Sørenson (1984) 218–20, 226; De Vivo (1996) 181). In particular, Seneca's attack on the contemporary practice of using snow to cool drinks and bathing water seems to deliberately evoke the *decoctio Neronis*, a method of using snow to cool water mentioned by Pliny, Suetonius, and Cassius Dio (*Natural Questions* 4b.13; *Natural History* 31.40; Suetonius, *Nero* 48.3, Dio 63.28.5). However, these associations may not have been apparent to Seneca's first readers or intended by the author himself: the vehemence of Nero's later critics makes it difficult to determine how far his contemporaries perceived

the faults for which he was later famous (Gauly (2004) 193–207, Hine (2006) 63–7). In Pliny's text, Nero's extravagance and arrogance sets the emperor in opposition to nature; in Seneca's account, Nero's relationship to the natural world appears harmonious. The differences in these two assessments play out in the two authors' treatment of two key issues for the emperor: the meanings of natural phenomena understood as portents for the *princeps* and the role of the emperor in encouraging research into the natural world.

In AD 60, a comet had appeared in the sky over Rome, a phenomenon that was traditionally interpreted as a sign of the death of a ruler (Tacitus, *Annals* 14.22.1; Suetonius, *Nero* 36). According to Suetonius, Nero took advice on what this meant for him and was advised by Balbillus that the best means of avoiding his own death was to kill someone else in expiation (Suetonius, *Nero* 36.1). Cassius Dio tells us that Seneca attempted to dissuade Nero from this method of expiating portents: "no matter how many people you kill, you cannot kill your successor" (Cassius Dio 61.18.3). The question of whether or not comets were dangerous portents for a ruler was a live one for Nero at the point at which Seneca was writing the *Natural Questions*: in book 7, Seneca is explicit in stating that the comet of AD 60 did not portend any calamities for Nero's very fortunate Principate, and has, in fact, done much to remove the bad reputations associated with comets (*Natural Questions* 7.21.3, 7.17.2; Williams (2007) 97–117). Although clearly politically expedient, this view is in keeping with Seneca's rationalizing approach in the *Natural Questions* to natural phenomena that had traditionally been interpreted as portents, suggesting that they had the same natural causes as other phenomena, and did not always act as prodigies (Hine (2010) 11–12; Taub (2003) 157–9). As Gauly has discussed, this stance had a wider resonance in the context of the prodigies said to have occurred in Nero's reign (Gauly (2004) 218–35). In the *Natural History*, Pliny embraces the full import of these prodigies, and notes that he discusses them in the (now lost) history he wrote of Nero's reign: a vineyard that moved from one side of the road to another (*Natural History* 2.199, 17.245), rivers flowing backwards (2.232), as well as the comet that was seen recurrently during Nero's reign (2.92). Nero's monstrosity is signaled by the fact that he was born feet first, according to his mother Agrippina, whose own dangerous character was apparent from the two canine teeth she had on the left side of her jaw (7.46, 7.71). The natural world is portrayed as responding to the unnaturalness of the emperor with signs and wonders that reflect his power at the same time as they comment on his corruption.

A Roman emperor held a particular, symbolic position in relation to nature. Not only did the natural world seem to comment on his rule through portents and prodigies, but knowledge of the natural world could be considered an attribute of the emperor's power (Murphy (2004) 204). In Pliny's *Natural History*, information from the fringes of the empire is transmitted back to the emperor at its centre, who acts as both recipient of knowledge and instigator of research (Murphy (2004) 194–216). Nero, for instance, is sent as a curiosity 360 stalks of wheat grown from a single grain (*Natural History* 18.95). The extent to which Nero was concerned with scientific, medical, and technical discovery during his Principate suggests that here, as in the arts, Nero may have encouraged developments (Hine (2006) 63–7). An expedition into southern Ethiopia is mentioned in both Seneca and Pliny as the source of new discoveries, though their perceptions of its overall purpose and Nero's role in it differ (De Vivo (1996); De Nardis (1989)). Seneca describes the ultimately unsuccessful expedition of two centurions to

discover the source of the Nile, following their journey along the path of the river with their Ethiopian guides until their path was cut off by an impassable marshland (*Natural Questions* 6.8.4). In Seneca's account, the men were sent on this research trip by Nero because of his virtuous interest in expanding knowledge and pursuing truth: "I heard two centurions whom Nero Caesar, great lover of the other virtues and especially of truth, had sent to search for the source of the Nile" (6.8.3, trans. Hine). This description presents Nero in a favorable light as someone who shares Seneca's concern with the natural world, actively pursuing inquiries into the truth of the great mystery of the Nile's source. Although Seneca himself may have influenced Nero's decision to send the expedition it was not uncommon for emperors to seek to expand geographical knowledge; direct intervention from Seneca was thus in all likelihood not necessary to the enterprise (Hine (2006) 63).

In any case, a different picture of the motivation for the journey emerges from accounts in Pliny and Cassius Dio, where it features as a reconnaissance mission for a planned military invasion of Ethiopia (*Natural History* 6.181, 12.19; Cassius Dio 63.8.1–2). In his listing of Ethiopian place-names, Pliny notes: "the fact that this is a wasteland was recently reported by the praetorian soldiers whom Nero sent under the command of a tribune to explore, when he was considering a war with the Ethiopians among his other wars" (6.181). Despite his somewhat dismissive tone, not all knowledge brought back by the expedition is negative in Pliny's account. The information derived by Nero's expedition is used to solve a debate among Pliny's Greek sources about the distance between Meroe and Syene: after listing the various views expressed by his sources, Pliny notes with some satisfaction that the dispute had been settled by the findings of Nero's expedition (6.35). Roman military might can silence Greek dispute. Again later, Pliny writes that the knowledge of Ethiopia that had been gained by the expedition under Nero demonstrated that ebony trees are not common in the southern reaches of the country, and comments that this information was probably the reason why ebony came third in the tribute that was imposed on the country (12.19). For Pliny, Nero's Ethiopian expedition arises from a military exercise and the information gained is put to use in the service of imperial administration. This is a trajectory not uncommon in the *Natural History*, where information on distant peoples can be derived from a triumph or a triumphal arch, and Roman conquest is seen to expand human knowledge (3.136–7, 5.36–7; Murphy (2004) 129–64).

The two versions of the motivations for the trip – military scouting exercise or journey of discovery – are not really in conflict. Alexander the Great famously coupled military expansion with first-hand research, and it has been suggested that the Senecan passage is intended to evoke associations between Nero and Alexander (Gauly (2004) 198–201). In the *Natural Questions*, however, Alexander is a problematic figure. Elsewhere Seneca insists that all the achievements of Alexander are tarnished by the fact that he had his court historian Callisthenes killed (6.23.2–3), perhaps a pointed allusion, given that Nero is thought to have promoted an association between himself and Alexander in the latter part of his Principate. In the *Natural History*, Alexander is regarded in a more positive light and Pliny makes extensive use of information derived from the writers who accompanied Alexander (French (1994) 170). Alexander's is an example that Romans might do well to follow, and yet Nero receives no praise from Pliny for the Ethiopian investigation. Elsewhere, Nero's failure to mount a planned expedition to the Caspian

Gates is contrasted with Alexander's success: the material left by those who took part in Alexander's expedition still forms the basis for geographers' accounts of the region (*Natural History* 6.40). This is precisely the sort of expedition that Pliny regrets Romans do not undertake more often: at the beginning of book 14, Pliny expresses frustration that although imperial expansion has opened up the world for new discoveries, Romans are so concerned with the pursuit of extravagance that they do not take proper advantage of the opportunities for gaining new knowledge that this presents (14.1–7). Nero's attempt to secure greater knowledge of Ethiopia is perhaps discounted by the lack of military success accompanying it.

The project of writing about nature in first-century Rome involved Seneca and Pliny in questions that were not purely academic or scholarly; it also had moral and sometimes political consequences. Studying nature and marveling at the wonders of the natural world could reflect and promote virtue in the individual, and, for Seneca, bring them closer to the divine. The relationship of nature's power to the power of human beings is a common theme, where the destructive and wasteful impulses of contemporary Roman culture are criticized for their perversity in failing to value the natural world properly. Nero is a problematic figure in this context; Pliny's *Natural History* vilifies the famously extravagant emperor as the epitome of unnatural living, against the backdrop of Flavian propaganda. In Seneca's writing too, the attacks on luxury can appear pointed, despite the overt praise of the emperor evident in the text. Nature is expected to speak to and about the emperor, through signs and portents, which lend the discussion of comets, lightning, and other natural phenomena a political relevance. The advancement of knowledge about the natural world is a fitting pursuit for an emperor, but even here, Seneca and Pliny produce different views of Nero's sponsorship of the Ethiopian expedition. Where Pliny sees the pursuit of knowledge going hand in hand with Roman military expansion, Seneca praises the emperor for his commitment to truth and the expansion of knowledge. It is these connections between nature and morality, nature and empire, that make the *Natural Questions* and the *Natural History* illuminating, not just for the insights they provide into the state of Roman knowledge under Nero, but for the light they throw on contemporary Romans' attitudes towards their place in the world, and the cultural anxieties that informed them.

FURTHER READING

Recent editions of Seneca's *Natural Questions* are provided by Codoñer Merino (1979), Hine (1996), Parroni (2002), and Vottero (1989). Hine (2010) provides a good English translation, with notes and introduction.

On Seneca's life, Stoicism, and relationship to Nero, see Griffin (1976, rev. 1992), Inwood (2005), Sørensen (1984), and Veyne (2002). The *Natural Questions* has been the subject of three recent monographs, Williams (2012), Gauly (2004), and Berno (2003); see also Gross (1989). On the substance of Seneca's meteorology, see Taub (2003) 141–61, and on specific aspects, Williams (2005b), (2006a), (2007), (2008a), (2008b). On the emperor and the world in the text, see Hine (2006).

Current editions of Pliny's *Natural History* include Conte et al. (1982–88), König et al. (1973–1999), Mayhoff (1892–1909), and the ongoing Budé edition of Beaujeu et al. (1947–). Rackham's Loeb edition is the only full English translation in print: Rackham et al. (1938–1962).

On Pliny's life and work, see the framework provided by Syme (1969), and for a critique of Pliny the Younger's account of his uncle, see Henderson (2002). Recent monographs on the *Natural History* have been produced by Carey (2003), Citroni Marchetti (2011), Doody (2010), Murphy (2004), and Naas (2002); Mary Beagon's work on nature in Pliny remains fundamental: Beagon (1992), see also Beagon (2005). There are a wide range of separate studies on different subjects within Pliny's work, most recently Gibson and Morello (2011), but see Healy (1999) and the collection of essays by French and Greenaway (1984) for an introduction to what might be thought of as "science" in Pliny.

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CHAPTER 18

Greek Literature Under Nero

Dirk Uwe Hansen

At the beginning of AD 68, the emperor Nero returned to Rome after a tour of Greece that had lasted for a whole year and had been extremely successful. By then, he was not only the ruler of the Roman empire, he was a winner of the Olympic Games and of the "European Song Contest" rolled into one. Had Plato's ideal republic been a *res publica litterarum* (republic of letters) rather than a state of philosophers, this would have been it: a poet on the mightiest throne in the world, the emperor of Rome trained and proven as an artist (Von Albrecht (1994) 711). Accordingly, one might assume the second half of the first century AD to have been an ideal time and clime for Greek literature, since Greek was not only a language of great importance for the civilized world, but also the mother tongue of a vast number of Roman citizens living all around the Mediterranean. Nero, moreover, was not only fond of the arts and literature, considering himself an artist, as his famous last words show (*qualis artifex pereo* – "what an artist dies with me!" – Suetonius, *Nero* 49.1). He also loved and adored all things Greek, especially the Greek predilection for sports, music, and poetry: Nero's *Ludi Iuvenales* and *Neronia*, which were modeled to Tacitus' outspoken indignation (*Annals* 14.14; 20) on Greek games, stand witness. Whether his love of Greek culture was merely an attitude or indeed a heartfelt sympathy, one would expect Greek literature to have flourished under Nero (for more on Nero's own artistry, see Fantham in this volume).

Some of the most far-reaching and important developments within European literary history began shortly before his reign, and therefore must have left a mark during the reign of Nero. The rise of prose fiction is marked by Chariton of Aphrosisias' novel *Chaireas and Callirrhoe*, which, as the oldest extant novel, must have been written towards the end of the first century BC, as well as by Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Cleitophon*, Heliodorus' *Aithiopica*, and Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe*, all of which were written during the second century AD. We find a parody of Greek prose fiction as early

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as the second century AD as well – Lucian's *True Histories* – and there is, of course, that eminent novel by Petronius, the *Satyrica*, a piece of Latin prose fiction in the tradition of both Greek Menippean satire and the novel (see Murgatroyd in this volume).

Rhetoric and literary studies had reached an extremely high level shortly before the middle of the first century AD with the rise of the Atticist movement which propagated the use of classical Greek language and style modeled on the orations of, e.g., Lysias in literary production. Again we find that movement still flourishing, and even more vividly so, during the second century AD in authors such as Plutarch of Chaironea, Lucian of Samosata, and the writers belonging to the so-called Second Sophistic, a term coined by Philostratus in his *Lives of the Sophists* (1.507.29). One of the last great Stoic philosophers, Musonius Rufus, was born around the year AD 30, and his teachings were written down shortly after Nero's death by Musonius' pupils, among them Epictetus, the author of the *Enchiridium*, a philosophical handbook still popular in our times (see Bryan in this volume). The Greek-speaking Jewish author Philon of Alexandria, whose *interpretatio graeca* of biblical writings marked the beginning of philosophical theology and was therefore of the greatest importance for early Christianity, died shortly before Nero's reign. Another Greek-speaking Jewish author, Flavius Josephus, wrote his historical works just after AD 70. And finally, the first step towards the compilation of the collection of epigrams known as the *Anthologia Palatina*, the Garland of Meleager, was taken about a hundred years before Nero was acclaimed emperor, and the next part, the collection of Philippus, might have been compiled in or shortly after the Neronian Age (Cameron (1993) 56–65). Thus, we should expect at least some of the new poems in Philip's Garland to have been written during Nero's reign.

Yet if we look at Greek literature of the Neronian Age, exclusively, that is, if we gather those writers who can be dated to the years between AD 54 and 68, we do not find the vast amount of books, poems, and treatises we might have expected. The poet on the throne did not encourage too many Greek authors, it seems: there are no Greek rivals of Seneca, Petronius, or Lucan, to name just the most prominent Latin authors that were part of Nero's court. Nevertheless, there are a few Greek authors connected to the emperor's name, either because they dedicated their works to him, or because Nero banned them from Rome. Thus, Musonius Rufus was banned in 65/66, later pardoned by Galba and exiled again under Nerva. Lucillius, one of the poets whose work is found in the *Anthologia Graeca*, dedicated what seems to be the opening poem of the second book in his own collection to Nero; and since another poet from the anthology, Nicarchus, was a close follower of Lucillius (Nisbet (2003) 91–3) both can be dated to the Neronian era. Andromachus, who was Nero's physician, dedicated his long poem on poisons to the emperor. More prominent was another physician who served under Nero and wrote extensively on plants, Pedanius Dioskurides, whose fame in modern times is at least partly due to one of the most beautifully illuminated Greek manuscripts preserved in the Wiener Hofbibliothek. And there is another author who can be dated even more precisely: Heron of Alexandria describes the lunar eclipse that took place on March 13, 62, in his work on mechanics. In addition, six out of seven proto-Pauline letters, those letters that can be surely attributed to Paul himself, can be dated to the years between AD 54 and 60. And there are more works that have often been dated, though not securely dated, to the first century AD. The epigrammatist Rufinus, for example, and therefore also Strato, who seems to imitate Rufinus every once in a while (Höschele (2006) 60),

the third and fourth books of Maccabeans, and the philosophical treatise *Tabula Cebetis* (see below).

Two Influential Starting Points

Incredible Things Beyond Thule

There are two works I would like to discuss to begin with, although we can by no means be certain in attributing them to the Neronian era: the anonymous treatise *On the Sublime*, transmitted under the name of Longinus, and *Incredible Things Beyond Thule*, an adventurous novel of love and travel by the otherwise unknown author Antonius Diogenes. His name leads us to identify him as a Roman citizen, probably stemming from Aphrodisias in Egypt (Bowersock (1994) 38): sadly, the novel itself is lost to us, but we still possess a summary of this work in the famous *Bibliotheke* of the patriarch Photius (ninth century AD). We can easily presume it to have been quite popular, since Lucian of Samosata makes it one of the targets of his brilliant parody, the *True Histories*. Thus it might be a good example of what kind of fiction was read (or written) during Neronian times. The ties of Antonius Diogenes to the time of Nero have recently been strengthened further by Bowie (2007) who points out connections between this author and Petronius. Nonetheless, Bowie wisely decides to leave open the question whether one of the two uses the other or whether they in fact share a common source.

The story of *Incredible Things Beyond Thule* is not easily reconstructed from Photius' rendering. It is hard to summarize as it is told by different characters (narrators) at different stages of the narrative, their voices intermingling in different ways with what the heroine Derkylis tells her lover Deinias – at night, because an evil spell causes her to lie as if dead during the day – in the city of Thule, which is situated far north of the known world. Derkylis and her brother Mantinias had to flee from their hometown after – so it seems – having killed their parents, and are hunted by an evil magician named Paapis. Their journey to Thule is marked by several adventures: they are separated at least once and also visit the Underworld. These adventures are told in books 2–23 of a work consisting of 24 books. Book 1, as far as we know, tells how Derkylis and Deinias met in Thule. Book 24, narrated by Deinias' friend Azulis, then recounts the rescue of Derkylis and Mantinias from their spell, Deinias' voyage to the moon, and finally the meeting of the whole party, including at least one more friend, in the city of Tyrus, plus a happy ending. In addition there are further stories told in this book, the most fascinating of which deal with the philosopher Pythagoras and his pupils.

Antonius Diogenes not only masks himself as an ancient fifth-century BC author of "old comedy," but he disguises his novel as well. It is based, so we are told in the opening letter of dedication to Antonius' learned sister Isidora, on the biography of Deinias. This biography was written by a certain Erasinides after Deinias' own account, and found by Balagrus, the guard of Alexander the Great, in Deinias' grave during the conquest of Tyrus in the year 332 BC. On the chest containing the documents the following words are written: "Stranger, whoever you may be, open this and learn what will make you wonder" (Photius, *Biblioteca* cod. 166.111b).

Incredible Things Beyond Thule, as far as we can see from the few pages Photius dedicates to this long story, was not only a tremendously entertaining read for those readers of the early imperial age who were interested in amorous and adventurous stories reaching out to places as far away as the moon or even Scandinavia. It must also have been of interest to, and meant to be read by, educated readers. The 24-book structure clearly recalls the structure of Homer's *Odyssey*, and the distribution of the narration to different layers of storytelling by different characters is a highly sophisticated feature: in this Antonius Diogenes seems to have been even more complex than Heliodorus. In addition, in order to benefit from the long passages and dialogues dealing with Pythagorean philosophy any reader would have needed a suitably thorough education. In those days to be educated meant to be versed in literature and to be able to speak properly, that is, to be trained in rhetorical skills. As Dihle ((1994) 62–70), who speaks of a "rhetorization" of literature, including poetry, points out, the importance of rhetoric can hardly be overestimated. Since the intellectual climate of the imperial age was dominated by the Atticist movement, being educated, to Greek-speaking people, also meant that one had to be trained in the canonical literature and in the dialect of classical Greece.

On the Sublime

The short treatise *On the Sublime* by an unknown author, usually called Pseudo-Longinus, may serve as an example here. As Von Albrecht ((1994) 711) observes, it would nicely fit into the timeframe in question, though it cannot be dated with any certainty. Nothing is known about the anonymous author, but since he cites the Hebrew Bible in chapter 9, he may well have belonged to a Greek-speaking Jewish community. His aim is to show how sublime thoughts could be, and actually are, expressed in classical literature, drawing heavily but not exclusively on Homer, Plato, and Demosthenes. Fortunately, one of Sappho's most beautiful works is preserved in this treatise, a poem which would otherwise have remained unknown to us. Pseudo-Longinus leaves no doubt that he despises Hellenistic literature, but he is not unaware of one of the major problems faced by those writing at a time that had to come to terms with a great classical tradition: the aim of his teaching is not imitation of the classics, but the ability to express his own sublime thoughts in a way that would have suited even the classical authors. He would certainly have rejected the military treatise "How to be a General" (*De Optimo Imperatore*) written by Onasander during the first century AD and dedicated to Quintus Veranius Nepos, consul of the year 49 (see Smith (1998)). This treatise, though composed in a very stylish Atticising Greek, pretends that armies are still what they were in the times of the Peloponnesian War. Thereby the work proves to be learned but useless, dwelling in the glorious but long-lost past of classical Greece: a fact that did not prevent it being widely read in late antiquity and the Renaissance.

On the Sublime ends with the account of a short discussion the author claims to have had with one of his listeners, a philosopher. The two men debate the question "why there are no or only so very few orators with sublime thoughts and souls anymore." The answer proposed by the philosopher is: the end of democracy has brought about a lack of freedom, and being ruled restricts free spirits. The author, however, begs to differ.

It is always easy, he claims, as well as typical of mankind, to censure the present times. Yet it is not government that subdues the sublime in contemporary society but the desire for wealth. Being rich, not being ruled, restricts the spirits, since the fellow citizens "admire what is mortal in them so much, they neglect to improve what is immortal." (*On the Sublime* 44.8). Clearly, the focus of this anonymous author goes beyond oratory towards philosophy; and still the dialogue is the adequate form of expression in philosophy. And when he talks of how the offspring of wealth – hubris, lawlessness, shamelessness – once established in the soul corrupt those who have acquired wealth, the most eminent philosopher of Neronian times, Musonius Rufus, would surely have agreed with him.

From Rhetoric to Philosophy

Gaius Musonius Rufus

Of Gaius Musonius Rufus we do for once know some biographical facts. He was born shortly before the year 30 in the town of Volsinii to a family of the equestrian order. In the year 65/66 Nero banned him from Rome to the small island of Gyaros (or Gyara), one of the Cyclades, where for the first time in his life he lived in the Greek-speaking part of the world. He was called back to Rome by Galba in the year 69, and subsequently exiled again by Vespasian, but allowed to return during the reign of Titus. He must have died before Pliny wrote his letter 3.11, in which he refers to Musonius in the past tense, that is some time before AD 100.

Musonius taught philosophy but did not write down his teachings, at least not for publication. Nevertheless we do know a fair amount of what went on in his classroom since his pupils Epictetus (55–135) and Dio Chrysostomus (40–110) have given us a comprehensive and reliable account of their master's sayings. Besides, about 40 excerpts from his teachings are preserved in the anthology compiled by Johannes Stobaeus. The letters, however, that are preserved in his name have turned out to be forgeries. (King (2010) collects and translates the evidence: for more on Musonius, see Bryan in this volume.)

As a philosopher who did not transmit his teachings to writing, Musonius of course parallels his famous predecessor Socrates. And indeed Socrates is the philosopher Musonius is most frequently compared to already during the imperial age. The early church father Origen (AD 185–254) cites Socrates as a distant example of the good life and Musonius as a similar one from the recent past (*Contra Celsum* 3.66). Where Socrates found a Plato, Musonius found an Epictetus: a slave whose master allowed him to attend Musonius' classes and who later, after his teacher's death, wrote one of the most successful philosophical works ever, *Enchiridium* ("The Handbook"). Addressing the question whether Epictetus merely repeated what he learned from his master, or whether Musonius was no more than an intermediate step between the elder *Stoa* and Epictetus, however, is beyond the scope of this essay.

As far as we can see, Musonius' teaching and philosophizing was mainly focused on ethics, particularly the applied ethics concerning questions of everyday life (Dillon (2004) 9). He has something to say on every aspect of life: how to look at life and death,

richness and poverty, how to manage a family, bear ill fate, and how to lead a virtuous life. Musonius' concept of virtue is on the one hand traditional in that it is based on the four cardinal virtues Plato defines in the *Republic* (wisdom, justice, courage, and temperance). But on the other hand it is also quite modern: philosophy is, for example, a suitable subject of study for men and women, and according to Musonius' teaching, girls should be educated in the same way as boys. Musonius despises the love of gold and riches. He showed his personal disdain in giving away a considerable sum of money to a beggar who pretended to be a philosopher, commenting that if this man only pretended to be a philosopher, he did not deserve anything better than money. To him, the fear of death is unnecessary for a philosophical mind, as is the fear of being exiled. Pleasure moreover is not a good: in one of his sentences which look strikingly modern, Musonius criticizes that "we take cooks more seriously than those who grow the food" (*Discourses* XVIII^{b}).

Musonius proved himself to be a practical philosopher not only by enduring a difficult life in exile, but also by claiming that working with your hands and enjoying the freedom of thinking is the truly philosophical way of life. He practiced the "unity of teaching and acting" (Dillon (2004) 5) in a situation Tacitus describes in *Histories* 3.81: in the year 69 Musonius was sent by Vitellius as an ambassador of peace to one of Vespasian's generals, Antonius Primus. Fearlessly, Musonius addressed the soldiers with a talk on the blessings of peace and was nearly trampled to death among them because this wisdom was unwelcome – because of his *intempestiva sapientia*, "wisdom shown in the wrong moment" – in Tacitus' words. Musonius, it seems, was not only a teacher of Stoic principles but even a living exemplum of these principles.

Apart from what we can learn about Musonius' philosophical system from his pupils Epictetus and Dio Chrysostomus, we also possess a small corpus of about 20 anecdotes related by one Lucius, about whom nothing is known, and preserved in the collection of Stobaeus. These anecdotes are very similar to Xenophon's famous *Memorabilia* of Socrates. In most of them the starting point is somebody's question, followed by an answer in the words of Musonius himself. Number 4, for instance, begins: "When someone brought up the topic whether daughters should be educated in the same way as sons, Musonius replied that horse breeders and hunters raise horses and dogs in the same way whether they are male or female." And he continues to explain that since the aim of education is virtue and men and women are both in need of virtue, they should be educated in the same manner. Here, as in most of these anecdotes, we can observe Musonius' mode of adapting Socratic philosophical principles to the society of his own day.

True philosophy to be looked at: the Tabula Cebetis

The question of how to make use of philosophical principles for a good life is answered in another text, the *Tabula Cebetis* ("Tablet of Cebes"). It may be dated to the Neronian era if we accept the hypothesis that it was known already to Dio Chrysostomus (Seddon (2005) 179). This text follows an old mode of writing, as an *ekphrasis* of a fictitious object, a tablet placed in the temple of Cronus as a votive offering, which is in fact an allegorical picture of life itself. An old man explains the allegory to the visitors, and it

proves to be a "distillation of the essential elements of Stoic ethics" (Seddon (2005) 184). The author is eager to stress the importance of education:

> Now then, do you see beside the gate, he asked, a beautiful woman with a calm expression? . . . And with her are two others who appear to be her daughters. – Yes, so it appears. – The one in the middle is Education, and the others are Truth and Persuasion. – But why is she standing on a square stone? – This is a sign, he said, for those arriving here that the path leading to her is safe and secure. (*Tabula Cebetis* 18, trans Seddon)

It goes without saying that Fortune is represented in the *Tabula Cebetis* by a female figure, too, but one who is standing on a round stone.

Philosophy for the Soul / Medicine for the Body

Pedanius Dioscurides

Readers of the Neronian Age were not only interested in practical philosophy. Probably the most influential and renowned pagan Greek author of the Neronian era was neither a philosopher nor a poet but a physician who was prominent enough to become one of those heathens to be allowed an afterlife in the first circle of hell in Dante's *Divine Comedy*. We do not know much about the biography of Pedanius Dioscurides of Anazerbas, "the good collector of herbs" (*Inferno* 4.139). He lived in Rome during Nero's reign, possibly as a military surgeon. He wrote in Greek, but already Galen in the second century AD criticized his poor abilities in that language, and we do not know any more of his education than that he was a pupil of Areius of Tharsus. Dioscurides' fame is based on his *opus magnum*, the five volumes of *De Materia Medica*, praised by Galen as the ultimate achievement in pharmacology. This work lists nearly 2000 plants and substances, their different names, descriptions, origins, the recipes for their use, and their effects on human beings. Originally they were collected alphabetically, but later the collection was rearranged systematically. In this treatise, Dioscurides combines the results of his own empirical research and the writings of his predecessors, thus becoming the first to describe the dosage of different drugs in any detail. At the beginning of his work he states explicitly that his aim was not only to repeat what the ancients had already written, but also to pass on the knowledge he had acquired through his own research from the time of his youth on. He even illustrated the *De Materia Medica* himself. Dioscurides' fame spread all over Europe, and he was copied, read, and used from late antiquity up to our times: nowadays his fame is based on the beauty of the illustrations that can be seen in the *Wiener Dioskurides* manuscript.

Andromachus

Even less well known today is another physician, Andromachus the Elder, the personal physician of the emperor Nero. Unfortunately, of all his works only the didactic poem *Theriaca* has survived, in a quotation by Galen. This little poem, however, secured his fame for many centuries. In 174 verses Andromachus describes the concoction known

throughout antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance as the theriac, an antidote that supposedly could act against almost anything that could poison a human being. This elixir was only to be gained by following an extremely long and complicated procedure requiring a long list of ingredients, so that its benefits were necessarily restricted to the very rich. Marcus Aurelius is said to have taken it regularly, and later it was to become one explanation for the wealth of Venice. We know Andromachus was born in Crete, and he had a son of the same name and the same profession who wrote a work on pharmacy – sometimes attributed to his father – of which the bulk has been lost. All we have are once again some citations in Galen. Andromachus was the first physician to bear the title Archiatros (''First Healer''). We do not know what made Andromachus write his famous recipe in elegiac verse, but he thereby produced one of the more curious examples of the genre of didactic poetry. Nor do we know anything about his connection to Nero, except that he praises the emperor in his opening lines: ''Hear of the force of the antidote with many ingredients, Caesar, giver of freedom that knows no fear, hear, Nero.'' He ends his recipe with the following words addressed to Paian, the healing god: ''give, Paian, . . . your healing daughter Panakeia always to my lord; he will in turn always thank you with his sublime sacrifices.''

Science and Mechanics: Heron of Alexandria

The theriac is, as far as I can see, no longer in use today. But there was at least one scientific mind in the Neronian Age whose findings prepared the ground for many a modern invention, and who was, in a different field of study, equally inventive and well read in the works of the ancients, namely those of the Babylonians: the engineer Hero of Alexandria, a Gyro Gearloose of the first century AD. Not many details of his life are known, but in a famous passage of his *Dioptra* he describes a lunar eclipse that took place on March 13, 62. Judging from the books he must have had access to, it is moreover quite probable that he worked at the Museum of Alexandria. We no longer possess all the books he wrote; indeed some of them are known only through citations in later authors. Of his *opus magnum*, the *Mechanica*, only an Arabic translation is still extant. Among the works which can still be read in the original Greek are his treatises on war machines (*Belopoeica*); on the progression of light (*Catoptrica*); on the measuring of lengths (*Dioptra*); the calculation of surfaces (*Metrica*); and his work on wonder-machines to open temple doors automatically and to pour wine from automatons, and on steam engines (used only as toys in his own times, though): the *Automata*. Hero was an author of handbooks in the best sense of the word. His writings not only traced the latest progress in science, but also included an account of the historical development of his field of study. Moreover, he often explains the Greek names of his devices with Latin terms in order to expand the circle of his readership to Roman professionals.

Seasoning Literature with Wit: The Epigram

One can say about Hero's *Mechanica* that it is firmly based on a grand tradition of predecessors, but on the other hand it is innovative and up to date. The same holds true for a writer in a completely different field of literature: the epigrammatist Lucillius.

The Greek epigram is one of the oldest genres of literature, the first verse inscriptions dating from well before the Persian wars. In the course of time the epigram took on a wide variety of shapes (and sometimes sizes): tomb inscriptions, inscriptions on votive-offerings, and inscriptions on presents for one's beloved still retained the original form of an epi-gram (from *epigraphein*): a short poem inscribed on the object it is meant to describe or explain. But soon the use of epigrammatic poems was extended to what we nowadays tend to understand by an epigram: a clever or surprising saying condensed into an elaborate form. In this development the witty epigram that pokes fun at an individual person, profession, or habit played an important role. Two poets can be called the inventors of the "scoptic epigram" (Nisbet (2003)): Marcus Valerius Martialis and Lucillius, the one writing in Latin, the other in Greek, during the second half of the first century AD.

Only about a hundred of the epigrams of Lucillius have been preserved, all of them in the huge collection of the *Anthologia Palatina*. Details of his life are lost to us, but we can securely date him to the Neronian era since he names the emperor in what must have been the opening poem of the second book of his collection: musing on whether to begin this second book with an Homeric or Hesiodic appeal to the muses, he finally decides on the following statement: "Olympian Muses, daughters of Zeus, I would not have survived if Emperor Nero had not given me some small change." (*Anthologia Palatina* 9.572.7–8). The starting point of every innovation in the Greek literature of his time is and must always be, or so he maintains, the literature of the glorious past, as were Socrates' sayings for Musonius and the notes of the Babylonian mathematicians for Hero of Alexandria. In Lucillius' writings, however, the glorious past is used primarily as a backdrop in order to be able to make fun both of the emperor Nero (who is not the generous supporter of the arts he would like to be known as) and the poet himself (who is writing for a bit of money, not eternal fame: cf. Nisbet (2003) 37).

Within the flexible epigrammatic genre there have always been witty, funny, and at times lampooning epigrams. But Lucillius succeeds in making the scoptic epigram a sub-genre in its own right. He aims not at well-known personalities among his contemporaries but writes his epigrams on or against typical characters: sportsmen; people who are either huge, or tiny, or thin, or have extremely big noses; physicians; bad poets and artists; teachers and grammarians; scrooges and false philosophers or prophets. Names do not hint at real people in his epigrams but are part of the game. Lucillius seems to have been the first to give a boxer the nickname "Bull" in 11.80 ("This statue was erected by his competitors for the boxer called "Bull," for he never did anyone any harm") and the first to introduce a scrooge who, when hungry, prefers sniffing money to eating. Other characters are a prophet named "Olympos" who is anything but Olympic, doctors who can kill even a statue of Zeus merely by touching it, and a teacher who prefers to practice conjugations with his pupil's mother. Thus his poems tend to be in the comic rather than the invective mode.

Lucillius found an imitator and maybe a rival in the poet Nicarchus. Of the work of this poet even less than of Lucillius' is preserved: 38 epigrams in books 5 and 11 of the *Anthologia Palatina* and some small scraps of papyrus recovered in Oxyrhynchus. These papyri at least prove that an edition of Nicarchus' poems did exist at some point, probably as early as the first century AD. We can observe Nicarchus imitating Lucillian motifs, even taking over the wording of whole verses. However, Nicarchus is quite individual in being

much more prone to obscenities and the description of bodily functions than Lucillius. To give just a short example: "I cannot decide, whether Diodoros is yawning/or farting, since above and below is always the same air" (*Anthologia Palatina* 11.242).

There are more poems by anonymous or otherwise unknown poets from about this time in the vast depths of the *Anthologia Palatina*. We find a birthday poem dedicated to "Caesar" by Leonidas of Alexandria (6.321): but whether this Caesar is Nero or Vespasian cannot be decided with certainty. Both of them will surely have appreciated the more traditional dedicational epigrams by this poet, who was a follower of the Hellenistic idea of small but well-worked-out verse, but lacked the sharp and witty mockery of Lucillius and Nicarchus.

The Beginning of Something New: Christian Theology and the Letters of Paul

By far the most influential, most often read, and most often translated author of the Neronian Age – in modern times, that is – was a Greek-speaking Jewish author, Paulus of Tarsus. All of the letters of the so-called proto-Paulinian Corpus, i.e. the letters that are considered to have been genuinely written by Paul, were composed between AD 50 and 60: the first letter to the Thessalonians, the letter to Philemon, the letters to the Corinthians, Galatians, Romans, and Philippians. Despite the fact that there has been extensive research on Paul, our knowledge of the details of his life is once again scarce. We know that he was born in Tarsus in Cilicia some time between 30 BC and AD 14, but we do not even know whether he was a Roman citizen or not. He was unmarried, well-educated in the Greek language as well as in Jewish studies, but spoke Latin only poorly. He was a dedicated, even fundamentalist Pharisee until his conversion, which he describes himself (in 1 *Corinthians* 9.1, 15.8 and *Galatians* 1.12–16). We know of his travels to Greece, Asia Minor, and finally to Rome in 59/60, where he eventually died, but we do not know how and when, nor whether his death was connected to one of the prosecutions or not. There are later accounts of his death (1 *Clement* 5.5–7), as well as of his looks and appearance in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* (chapter 3), but those are of limited worth as sources (for more on Paul and Nero, see Maier in this volume).

What we do know is that he was extremely successful as a missionary, founder of Christian parishes, teacher, and theologian. And this success is closely connected to the seven letters mentioned above: before these epistles were collected and became the corpus of letters known to us, each of them was written for a specific purpose within a specific context. The first letter to the Thessalonians deals with a fundamental question of Christian theology: that of death and resurrection. Paul aims to convince the brethren of the certainty of salvation for those who died before the return of Christ as well as for those who will be alive when he returns. The letter to Philemon, probably written between 53 and 55, bears the character of a private letter and seems to be a letter of recommendation written for the slave Onesimus. The first letter to the Corinthians deals with a number of questions the brethren had posed concerning the unity of their community and social and individual ethics. The second letter to the Corinthians, which may well be a collection of different letters assembled afterwards, is an epistle against Paul's opponents who had won some influence on the Christians of Corinth. The epistle

to the Galatians again concentrates on a fundamental issue, the relationship between Christian faith and Jewish law concerning the question of baptism versus circumcision. In 56/57 Paul wrote the longest and most influential of these letters, the letter to the Romans. This letter has often been read as a compendium of Pauline theology. The letter to the Philippians on questions of Christology and the recusation of false teachings was written in prison. Thus it is possibly the last of Paul's letters, if written during his imprisonment in Rome about AD 60. Included in this letter is the famous hymn on Christ, describing his incarnation, death, and elevation (*Philippians* 2.5–11).

The corpus of the proto-Pauline letters, then, can be seen as the first step towards a systematic Christian theology. The ground for this had already been prepared earlier, when Philo of Alexandria, a Jewish intellectual and well educated in Greek philology – as, incidentally, was Paul himself – began to make use of Hellenic philosophy to explain his own religious belief. The format of a collection of letters also was quite well known to Paul's contemporaries. The development of Paul's letters, assembled to look like a theological corpus after having been written for and in specific and individual situations, mirrors the corpus of Seneca's letters to Lucilius, a philosophical treatise broken up into more than 124 letters of different length and style precisely in order to give the impression of specific occasionality (see Mannering in this volume).

Conclusion

In AD 68, Nero's life ended by his own hand. Shortly afterwards, Greek literature began to flourish in spectacular richness and variety: Epictetus composed his handbook of morality, thus saving many of Musonius' teachings, Dio Chrysostomus wrote his famous discourses, Plutarch began his exuberant literary production. The first gospel was written by Mark the Evangelist, Flavius Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum* (''Jewish War'') and his apologetic *Contra Appionem* (''Against Apion'') appeared, and prose fiction took its prominent place in the history of literature. Greek-speaking authors, it seems, had only waited for the poet to leave the throne.

FURTHER READING

Very little research has focused on Greek literature in the reign of Nero. An accessible and introduction to the role of Greek literature in the Roman empire is König (2009): for overview of Greek and Latin literature in the Julio-Claudian era, see Dihle (1994) 62–171. Many of the recent studies in English devoted to the ''Second Sophistic'' engage with the authors I have discussed above: see in particular Whitmarsh (2002).

King (2010) offers translation and introduction to Musonius Rufus; see too Dillon (2004) and Bryan in this volume. For the *Tabula Cebetis*, see Seddon (2005). Pedanius Dioscurides' *De Materia Medica* is translated into English, with full and helpful notes, in the edition of Beck (2005) – for more on Pedanius, see Riddle (1985) and Scarborough and Nutton (1982). Andromachus' *Theriaca*, included in Galen, *De Antidotis* I. 6, and *De Theriaca ad Pisonem*, chapter 6, is briefly discussed in Prioreschi (1998) 442–4. The collected essays by Tuplin and Rihll (2002) are a good place to start understanding Greek science, with two chapters dedicated to Hero of Alexandria. The *Cambridge Companion to Paul*, edited by Dunn (2003), devotes a significant portion of time to the letters; for Paul and Nero, see Maier in this volume. The

epigrams of the *Anthologia Graeca*, with English translation, can conveniently be found in the Loeb *Greek Anthology* (trans. W. R. Paton (1916–27)) and are discussed by Cameron (1993). For Greek epigram under Nero and Lucillius and Rufinus in particular, see Höschele (2006), Nisbet (2003), and Sullivan (1991) chapter 3.

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CHAPTER 19

Buildings of an Emperor – How Nero Transformed Rome

Heinz-Jürgen Beste and Henner von Hesberg

We often talk about the "construction policy" of an emperor. Less clear is whether that discussion concerns the gradual implementation of the ruler's wishes, or the deliberate strategy of enhancing a claim to power by means of construction. In the following we assume that both factors interact: Neronian buildings were both the result of active planning and reaction to specific expectations, as well as the continuation of traditional characteristics created for former rulers. To understand the general strategy under Nero it would be useful to first know the particulars. Had Nero drawn up and followed something like a master plan? Or was Nero's Rome the result of a chain of many individual decisions (Scheithauer (2000) 122–6; 258–9)? This chapter will attempt to address these questions by examining the construction projects of the Neronian Age, both public and private.

Public Buildings and their Function

Residential quarters and food supply

Nero is perhaps most famous as a builder; not only because of the Great Fire of Rome (AD 64; see Plate 1), which granted the emperor a greater opportunity for urban development than any of his predecessors, but also because this urban development – according to ancient tradition – was devoted almost exclusively to the construction of his "Golden House," the Domus Aurea. However, even Tacitus had to admit that after the Great Fire, Nero established living quarters of remarkable quality in those ruined areas which he did not use for his new palace complex. The emperor promised to clear the building site for this project (the debris was used for the drainage of marshland near Ostia) and

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the houses were meticulously measured, probably according to the rectangular scheme, and made accessible by wide portico-lined streets, porticoes Nero promised to pay for himself (*Histories* 15.43; cf. Suetonius, *Nero* 16; *Historia Augusta* 5.1–2). The number of floors a building could feature was limited and patios were provided. In addition, the construction work was subject to a host of regulations, in part to facilitate protection against fire. In multi-storied buildings the amount of lumber was reduced in favor of solid stone and each unit had its own walls on every side; water supply to the quarters was guaranteed and fire extinguishers were provided in every building. These actions did not just improve Rome (which until then was not known for high-quality residential construction for the masses), but also provided the template for later town planning, defining, for instance, the townscape of Ostia (Ballard (1965) 349–93).

Previous emperors had already attempted to regulate housing construction, but it was apparently not until Nero that these regulations took on a concrete form, motivated doubtless by the fact that a far greater area needed now to be rebuilt. Vestiges of these newly constructed buildings can probably be found on the Caelian Hill, between the Neronian water supply line serving the Palatine Hill and the southern front of the Temple of Divus Claudius. After the Great Fire extravagant *insulae* (blocks of flats) were constructed there, which matched the specifications above (above all in the protruding porticos, approx. 6m deep, along the street) – these virtually served as the outer frontier of the Domus Aurea (Pavolini (2006) 93–101, figs. 64–5, 71; Priester (2002) 129–32, 214–6). It still remains unclear to what extent these new measures were actually implemented. But Tacitus's appreciative account and unusually positive attitude indicates that there was extensive reworking of residential quarters throughout Rome, not only those in close proximity to the Domus Aurea.

While the new *insulae* were born of necessity after the fire, Nero had also sought to improve the well-being of the urban population before AD 64. The Macellum Magnum, a food market and supply point, was opened in AD 59 (though we can only visualize it through coin evidence: Dio 61.18.3; cf. Ruyt (1983) 172–7; *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae* (*LTUR*) III (1996) 204–6, figs. 136–7). It must have been a circular building in the centre of a bigger square, where predominantly meat and fish, but probably also luxury goods, were sold. Nero's concern for the creature comforts of the metropolitan population also manifested itself in spectacular acts; in AD 62 for instance he ordered spoilt corn to be thrown into the Tiber, though in the docks of the river 300 cargo ships had just been destroyed by a combination of storm and fire. Largely for this reason Nero tried to improve the food supply through building work, including construction on the ports at Ostia and Portus, depicted on a number of coins (*Roman Imperial Coinage* (*RIC*) I (1923) 151–2, plates 10, 168). These harbors – and thus Rome's food supply – must have been a major preoccupation for Nero, for he also planned to build a canal, deep enough for large ships, from Lake Avernus to Ostia and intended to extend the Roman city wall to Ostia, connecting both cities by canal (Suetonius, *Nero* 16; 31). Tacitus reports that he saw evidence of this hypertrophic project, and remains are still visible today in the Monte Circeo area, where attempts were made to shorten the passage around the cape by use of a canal (*Annals* 15.42: Johannowsky (1990) 1–14; Johannowsky (1994) 159–63; Lugli (1928) 31–2, no. 32; 46 no. 1 Carta 2 (A–D)).

The Temple of Divus Claudius on the Caelian Hill

A major concern for any Roman emperor was to legitimize his claim to power. One of Augustus' first acts was to build a temple in a dominant position in the Roman Forum for his apotheosized adoptive father Caesar. Nero too proved his *pietas* by holding a laudation in the Roman Forum for his predecessor Claudius, laying out his corpse in magnificent style and deifying him (Tacitus, *Annals* 12.69.2–3; Suetonius, *Nero* 9.1). Yet Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* seems to satirize this procedure by ridiculing Claudius' apotheosis and Suetonius tells us that while the building of the Temple of Divus Claudius was initiated by Agrippina, it was destroyed by Nero right after its construction; it would not be completed until Vespasian's reign (*Vespasian* 9). If Agrippina had started the construction, this must have been very soon after Claudius' apotheosis (AD 54), for five years later she too was dead. The temple would have demonstrated that Agrippina's deceased spouse was now among the gods, contributing not only to the justification of her own power but also the power of the adopted Nero (see Šterbenc Erker in this volume).

The archaeological record shows that the temple complex comprised two parts (Figure 19.1; cf. Colini (1944) 137–62; *LTUR* I (1993) 277–8); Moormann (2003) 383–5). The foundations of the temple consisted of an enormous terrace with measurements of about 205 × 160m, and a height of up to 10m. The size of the temple, which

Figure 19.1 Temple of Claudius, Model. *Source*: ©2012 DAIR.

lay at the centre of the terrace, was, at approx. 25 × 40m, rather small. However, these measurements are only known through the so-called Severan marble (a massive marble map of Rome, constructed in the third century AD). The details on this plan suggest that the temple was at the centre of an extensive park, surrounded by concentric borders or rows of trees. The remains of the terrace (which survive beneath the church SS. Giovanni e Paolo) are, given their accentuated bossages (uncut stones), likely to date to the time of Agrippina, for these can only be found on one other building, the Claudian Porta Maggiore: the terrace must then have been completed soon after Nero's accession.

Whether the same holds true for the temple of Divus Claudius is uncertain, for there are no remains of it. Considering the effort that went into its foundation, it is difficult to see why this rather small temple should not have been built, especially since the construction of the Domus Aurea did not start until AD 64. That Nero destroyed the building on purpose, as Suetonius suggests, seems rather unlikely: for what would he have gained from doing this? It is more likely that his actions were interpreted by contemporaries in this negative light because the Claudian Temple was integrated into the grounds of the Domus Aurea, and a large set of fountains – the largest ever built in Rome at that point – was placed in front of it. The very imbalance in size between the foundations and the actual temple might even have led to Suetonius' spiteful interpretation. Measured against the Temple of Divus Iulius, the Temple of Claudius is not even particularly small: but unlike the Temples of Divus Iulius and of Divus Augustus, it lay outside the Roman Forum, elevated on a high terrace and surrounded by a park, and was perceived by its visitors in quite a different way, almost as a place of amusement. It was, then, virtually predestined to be integrated into the much larger site of the Domus Aurea. Indeed Martial understood it to serve as the border of the Domus Aurea (*Epigrams* 2. 9–10).

The ''leisure'' concept behind the temple of Claudius could thus also imply a general alteration in attitude towards imperial temple complexes and deification in general. Nero's wife Poppaea, for instance, was not deified after her death in AD 65 despite Nero's praise in her funeral speech that she had given birth to a divine child (see Šterbenc-Erker in this volume). Instead she was embalmed in the manner of eastern kings and placed in the mausoleum of Augustus (Tacitus, *Annals* 16.6). In any case, the Temple of Divus Claudius embodies the first great and literally outstanding temple complex of the post-Augustan period. Although we only know the Temple of Divus Augustus, built by Tiberius in the Roman Forum, from coin portraits, it could not possibly have been so big. The Temple of Divus Claudius, on the other hand, with its wide façade, was geared to the residence of the first emperors on the Palatine Hill, and dominated the street in the valley between the Palatine and the Caelian Hill, a central route for important processions such as triumphs and funerals of members of the imperial family.

After victory over the Parthians, the senate bestowed Nero with a triumphal arch on the Capitoline Hill (AD 58; consecrated in 62). Its opulent embellishment, with figural adornments and ornaments, make it a truly extraordinary monument: coin evidence and surviving marble fragments of its cladding bear witness to this. Unlike previous arches, in which the purpose of the monument was to exhibit the image of the honorand in statuary form, Nero's arch also contained images outlining the achievements and the program of the *princeps* (Kleiner (1985); La Rocca (1992) 400–14; *LTUR* V (1999) 91–2). Among other buildings affected by the Great Fire were the Temple of Vesta and

the House of the Vestal Virgins, which seem to have been rebuilt with a few cutbacks in favor of the porticoes in the vestibule of the Domus Aurea (Tacitus, *Annals* 15.41). A picture of the refurbished temple even embellished a series of sesterces (*LTUR* V (1999) 125–8).

Campus Martius

Nero put great emphasis on the restructuring of the Campus Martius. At the beginning of the imperial era, Agrippa and Augustus had created a fundamentally new reality here by integrating the northern Campus Martius into the urban sphere, through the Mausoleum of Augustus and the Pantheon. With the Theater of Pompey and its porticoes, buildings for the people's entertainment had already been situated in the Campus Martius, but in the Augustan period several structures – the amphitheater of Statilius Taurus, the baths of Agrippa and plenty of porticoes and lakes (some of which were even suitable for games) – were added. Essentially, the Campus Martius became a recreational area thrown open to the people for their amusement: even the grounds around the Mausoleum of Augustus were public parkland.

In contrast, it is not easy to define Nero's activities in this region. "What is worse than Nero, what is better than his baths?" Martial asked (*Epigrams* 7.34.4), in a clear evocation of the dilemma the literary tradition about Nero poses. The sources, alternating between vicious polemic and panegyric are hardly objective in their assessment of Nero's building plans. The archaeological evidence, however, remains sparse, and the purposes of many structures unclear. Chronologically, the amphitheater is the first facility built under Nero, constructed in AD 57. It was made of wood, but was richly decorated (*LTUR* I (1993) 36): the panegyrical report of Calpurnius Siculus (*Eclogues* 7.23–84) gives an idea of its style, but the perspective from which this poem is written – that of a simple shepherd from the Abruzzi region – makes it difficult to tell whether the reference to the famous ivory rollers on top of the walls of the arena, which were supposed to keep wild animals away from the auditorium, really were so very extraordinary, or just seemed so to the ignorant rustic.

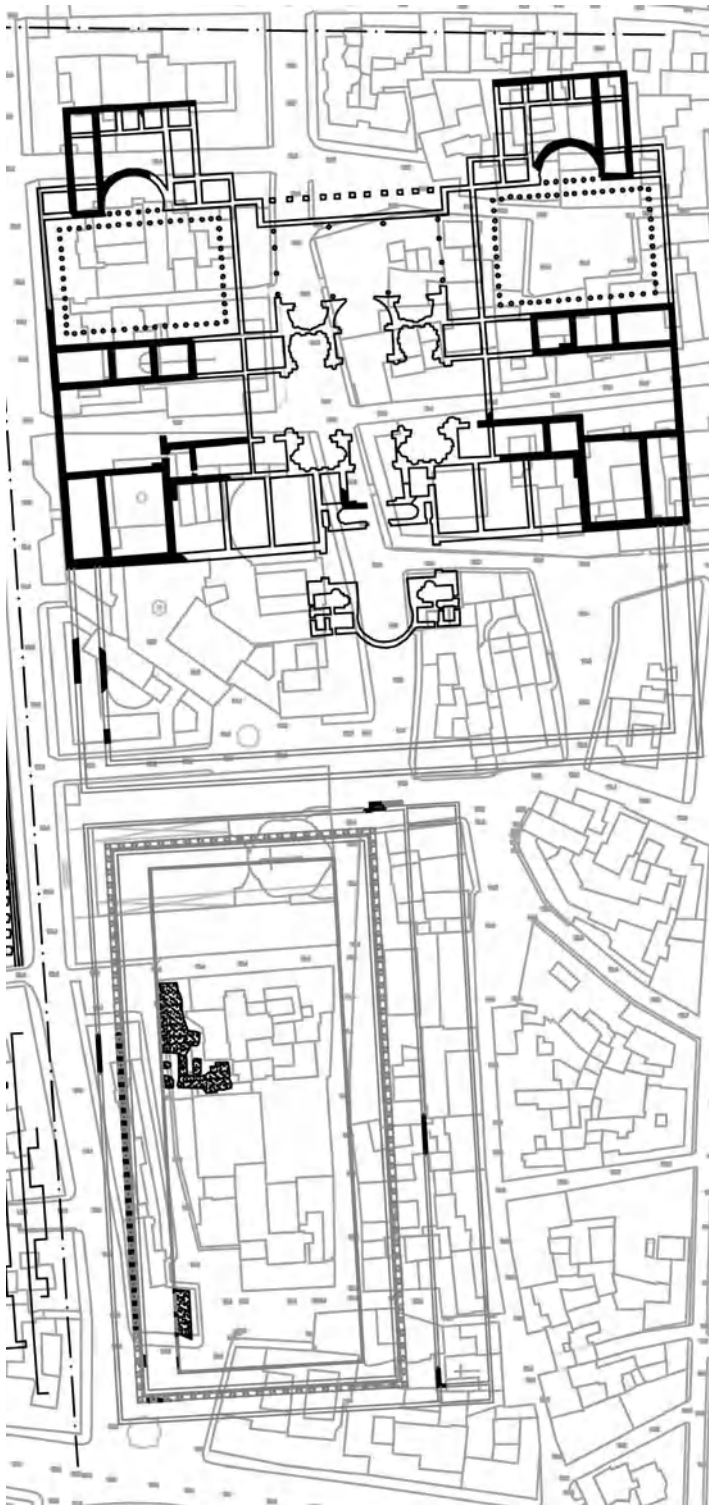
If Suetonius (*Nero* 12.1) is to be believed, conservative Romans were appalled by the new rules in Nero's games. As gladiators generally did not kill each other in the arena as many as 400 senators and 600 knights – i.e. two thirds of the Senate, and "even those with assets and a good reputation," as Suetonius indignantly notices – participated in the swordplay. The amphitheater might, then, have been a base for Nero's attempt to explore new forms of societal representation, in which members of different classes (more or less voluntarily) took part. Otherwise, it would have been quite unlikely for such a large proportion of the Senate to make an appearance. Equally Suetonius' story about Greek youths, who performed dramatic dances and obtained Roman citizenship in recompense for their efforts, seems to signify an attempt to introduce Greek conventions to Rome (see further Mratschek in this volume; Flaig (2003) 254–9 speaks of a "Neronian cultural revolution"). Nor did the *princeps*, as was customary, act as the chairman of the games; instead he ensconced himself in his private theater box. Suetonius disapproves, but once again Greek tradition offers an explanation: the emperor did not want to dominate the games, and instead a specific committee was chosen for this job. And while

Suetonius describes only two Roman "fatal charades" taking place in the amphitheater (cf. Coleman (1990) 44–73), it is significant that Calpurnius Siculus makes no comment on these: his account, reporting only the presence of the *princeps* and of wild beasts, does not conflict with Greek convention.

Around the time of the construction of the amphitheater, work must have also begun on Nero's great baths, which probably opened in AD 62 (see Map 2) (Ghini (1988) 121–77; *LTUR* V (1999) 60–2). They have a close relationship with the Neronia, quinquennial games first hosted in AD 60, then again in 65, and comprising contests in music, gymnastics, and horsemanship (Suetonius, *Nero* 12.3; see Mratschek and Fantham in this volume). Cassius Dio explicitly emphasizes that the Neronia, modeled on Greek prototypes, were the first games of this kind in Rome (61.21). The baths are known to us through Renaissance documentation, especially that of Andrea Palladio (1508–1580) and on-site remains, most recently analyzed by Guiseppina Ghini. But the major renovation of Nero's baths by Alexander Severus (AD 208–235) makes our analysis of their look in Nero's day problematic: the famous figural capital (from the Giardino della Pigna of the Vatican Museum) and most of the rest of the building ornamentation dates to Severus, whereas scarcely anything can be identified as Neronian (Ghini (1988) 168 tab. 30a). If – as is likely – the Severan layout reflects the original building, then these baths served as prototype for later imperial baths, such as the famous baths of Trajan, Caracalla, and Diocletian.

The baths of Nero are characterized by huge halls and wide courtyards, until then unusual features. Problems arose not only during the building process, given the effort that was necessary for the baths' accoutrement with architectural decorations and sculptures, but also (and above all) in the difficulties supplying water and heat, for the size and layout of the rooms required huge amounts of energy. If one can attribute the surviving layout to the building activity of Nero, the plan clearly differs in one aspect from later facilities of this type in Rome (Krencker (1929) 263–5). Although the great halls comprising the Calidarium (hot room), Tepidarium (warm room), and Frigidarium (cold room) already constitute – as in the later imperial baths – the major axis, they are framed by two additional axes, which connect the courtyards through further rooms, to the great halls. While later baths were designed so that all rooms were laid out towards the centre, in the Neronian baths these parts of the building were given equal weight. This new layout indicates a novel concept in purpose for the building: Nero changed the character of the Roman baths fundamentally.

Even the early Roman balneary or thermal bath included an abundance of elements that – in contrast to the Hellenistic public baths, which provided only simple tubs – made a luxurious visit possible (Nielsen (1990) 45–8; Manderscheid (2009) 145–7). The novelty of Nero's baths was a suite of well-lit halls, to which the basins were attached, as well as a number of courtyards. The design of the building itself facilitated the function of the baths: the opportunity, on the one hand, to meet informally and chat in a lively atmosphere and, on the other hand, to take care of the body with gymnastic exercises. Their spaciousness and accessibility made the baths a public space not dissimilar to many other halls and places on the Campus Martius. The many rooms attached to these two central axes, probably serving as lyceums, libraries, and exedras, bolster this interpretation. Different facilities for physical and intellectual education, brought together in Nero's baths, created a kind of Greek gymnasium. The baths can thus be



Map 2 Plan of Gymnasium and Baths of Nero (following A. Palladio). *Source*: ©2012 Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Roma F. Filippi.

understood as both a seat of learning and a place of *otium*, but with a specifically Hellenic flavor. This interpretation is supported by a facility that was attached to the south of the baths that, according to a recent reinterpretation, might be the *gymnasium* proper, which various writers ascribe to Nero (*LTUR* II (1995) 374). Venues for the Neronia were probably spread across Rome: the equestrian competitions must have taken place at the Circus Maximus, and for gymnastics the Saepta Iulia, a large voting hall built by Caesar on the Campus Martius, has been suggested (*LTUR* IV (1999) 228–9). Moreover, it has been proposed that the stadium building (today's Piazza Navona), which dates to the reign of Domitian, also had a Neronian incarnation (Colini (1941) 22–3). In this case, sufficient venues for the individual disciplines of the games would have been available and grouped on the periphery of Nero's baths.

In the context of Nero's festivities and games we also hear about his other building activities. As part of the tremendous coronation of the Armenian client-king Tiridates III, held in AD 66 in Rome (see Mratschek and D. Braund in this volume), Tiridates' enthronement was celebrated first on the *rostra* of the Roman Forum and then at the Theater of Pompey, where the stage had been gilded for the occasion (*LTUR* V (1999) 35–8). Nero also incorporated the facilities on the other side of the Tiber (i.e. now the Vatican area) into his games and performances. Caligula, with great effort, had already built a circus here (its obelisk today stands at the centre of St. Peter's Square; Liverani (1999) 21–7; 131 no. 57): the bridge, perhaps also Caligula's work (the label "Pons Neronianus" is medieval; cf. *LTUR* IV (1999) 111), directly connected the Campus Martius with the games venues; its massive piers are still visible in the Tiber today. In addition, Nero prepared for performances at the Circus Maximus there, practicing his chariot-driving (Suetonius, *Nero* 22) and also used the Vatican facilities for public spectacles. It was here that he had the Christians, who were blamed for the Great Fire, put to death by burning (Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44).

Outside of Rome, Nero – probably in an effort to improve the water supply for the baths of Baiae – planned a roofed pool, accompanied by porticos, which was intended to reach from Misenum to Lake Avernus, and which was supposed to incorporate every hot spring in this region (Suetonius, *Nero* 31). Further projects were obviously self-promotional: Nero ordered his Praetorian Guards to dig through the Isthmus of Corinth, even taking up the spade himself at the ground-breaking ceremony (Suetonius, *Nero* 19; Gerster 1884, 229–32 tav. 8). By and large though, in the cities of Italy as well as in the provinces, Nero was not personally responsible for building construction. While much work was done during his reign – for example in Ephesos and Miletus, where the theater stages were enlarged – it is unlikely that this was directly connected to the emperor's cultural interests.

The sources on Nero's building activities thus convey a mixed picture. On the one hand they show the good intentions of the *princeps*; on the other they reveal deficiencies in the feasibility of his major projects. Often it seems that it was the idea that was crucial to Nero: as the channel project in Italy shows, completion was not all that important. Nero's other building activities suggest that the emperor intended to create new forms of entertainment in Rome, in which the citizens could actively participate. Here the cultural notion of *otium*, once reserved for the private sphere, became not just public but also ingrained in the public space of Rome.

Nero's Palace Complexes in Rome

The most famous Neronian buildings are undoubtedly his palace complexes (see Plate 2). His imperial predecessors and even some Republican senators had owned extravagant residences. However, just as the Roman empire's apparatus of power gradually developed from a combination of the old Republican power structures with the position of the *princeps* (see Lavan in this volume), so too the idea of a residence that would meet the requirements of imperial representation and public relations evolved over time. The emperor Augustus may have lived on the Palatine Hill in a mixed lot of bought-up aristocratic houses, but his home's outer façade towards the Circus Maximus was, due to its integration into the area of the Temple of Apollo, together with its libraries and archives, of exemplary splendor. Augustus' successors enlarged this residence, but a uniform complex did not emerge. A new residence, the so-called Domus Tiberiana (as the complex of buildings on the Palatine Hill was called from Flavian times onwards), independent from its Augustan predecessor, must have exceeded that residence in size, form, and representative status (Tacitus, *Histories* 1.27.2; Plutarch, *Galba* 24.7; Suetonius, *Vitellius* 15.3).

Since the Domus Tiberiana was heavily damaged in the Great Fire, only a few archaeological remains of it from the Neronian period can be identified. The reconstruction – with a modified architecture – has an almost quadratic foundation of about 120 × 135m, framed by a portico approximately 7.4m wide. The entire complex was oriented towards an inner garden zone. The actual centre was the palace building, in the form of a square with basic measurements of approximately 83 × 83m, in the centre of which was a peristyle of about 31 × 45.5m. The complex was accessible through an outside staircase with a porch, which provided access to the forum via a ramp. In order to build this complex of buildings, large substructures were necessary, not visible today due to later building activities in this area (Tomei (1996) 186–9; Knell (2004) 116–17; Krause (2004) 49–51).

Besides extending the Domus Tiberiana, the construction of the Domus Transitoria was another major project, which Nero probably began around AD 60. According to Tacitus and Suetonius (*Annals* 15.39.1; *Nero* 31.1) it outshone every luxury building that had been constructed before (*LTUR* II (1995) 199–202). The Domus Transitoria made it possible to reach the imperial estates on the Esquiline Hill from the Palatine Hill (formerly the gardens of Maecenas and Lamianus). It is not possible to say how and where exactly the complex bridged the valley between Palatine and Oppian Hills and on which path it crossed the Esquiline Hill, dominated by public buildings. Once again, only a few archaeological traces concerning the form, extent, and exact location of the Domus Transitoria – yet another victim of the Great Fire – have survived. Since it was not reconstructed, our knowledge about the project is rather scanty, although the few remains of its décor show that artistically they were on the same level as those of the Domus Aurea (Bastet (1971) 144–72; (1972) 61–87).

There is a high probability that the rooms – a latrine and a portico or a larger hall – of the so-called Bagni di Livia, visible under the triclinium and the peristyle of the Domus Flavia, belonged to the Domus Transitoria. Furthermore, some remains along the Clivus Palatinus and an octagonal domed hall, from which four wide hallways branched off, under the Temple of Venus and Roma, are said to have belonged to the Domus Transitoria.

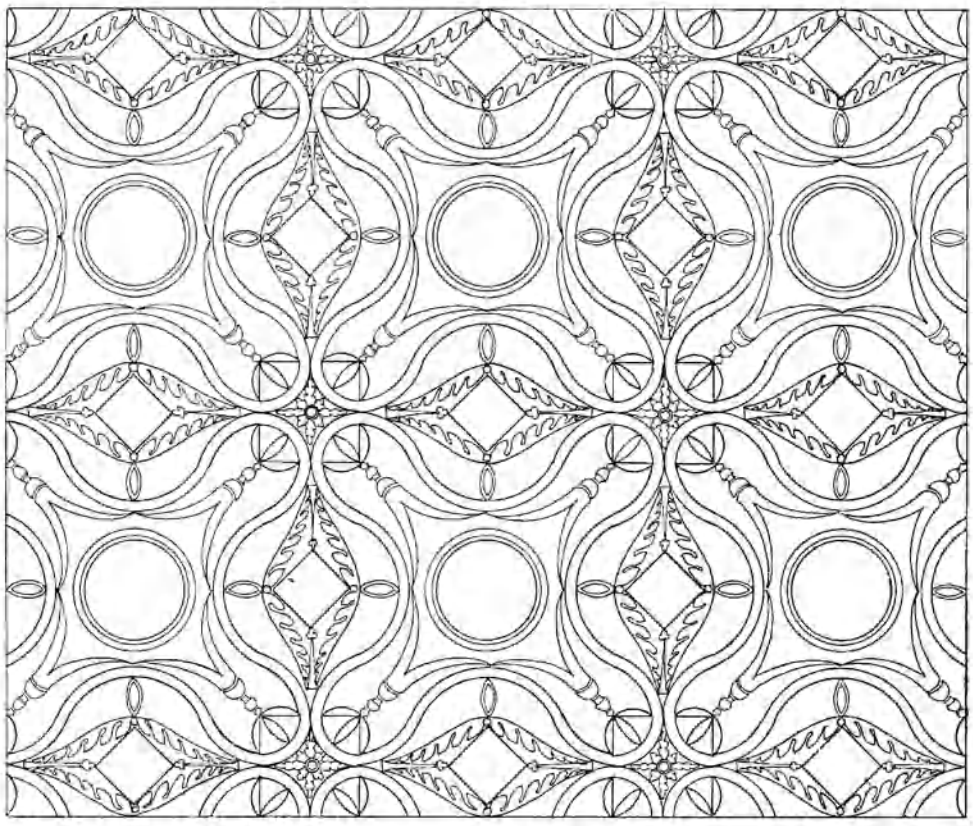


Figure 19.2 Drawing of the Opus Sectile Floor from the building above the Bagni di Livia. *Source*: ©2012 Carettoni/Tomei.

The nymphaeum (fountain room), was discovered in the eighteenth century and – through the removal of its frescos and architectural elements – largely destroyed. It consisted of a subterranean triclinium (dining room), with a fountain front, lateral rooms, and had particularly superb adornments made of multi-colored marble and other luxurious material. The few remaining parts and drawings from the time of its discovery convey a good impression of the luxury of its architecture (Manderscheid (2004) 75–84). Just as impressive are the multi-colored and multi-patterned enamel floors of the octagonal domed hall and its corridors, on top of which the Temples of Venus and Roma were later built (Figure 19.2).

All these efforts to create a "Neronian" architecture culminated in the Domus Aurea (Plate 2). The historian Tacitus reports that on the night of July 18–19, AD 64, a fire broke out in the stalls of the Circus Maximus:

> the conflagration both broke out and instantly became so fierce and so rapid from the wind that it seized in its grasp the entire length of the circus. For here there were no houses fenced in by solid masonry, or temples surrounded by walls, or any other obstacle to interpose delay. The blaze in its fury ran first through the level portions of the city, then rising to the hills, while it again devastated every place below them. (*Annals* 15.38.1, trans. Church and Brodribb)

There is no reason to assume – as Nero's contemporaries claimed – that the emperor himself had induced the fire to clear the ground for his new palace project. But whatever the cause of the fire, immediately afterwards, with huge expenditure of money – and by ruthless acquisition – Nero had a new residence, the Domus Aurea, built. Covering 50 hectares (80, if one counts the gardens of Maecenas and Lamianus) it was bigger and more luxurious by far than the Domus Transitoria, which had been destroyed by the fire.

The way contemporaries felt about the complex is clear. This is Suetonius' verdict:

> In no one thing was Nero more prodigal than in his buildings. He completed his palace by continuing it from the Palatine to the Esquiline hill, and called it at first only "The Passage" [Domus Transitoria], but, after it was burnt down and rebuilt, "The Golden House" [Domus Aurea]. Of its dimensions and furniture, it may be sufficient to say thus much: the porch was so high that there stood in it a colossal statue of himself a hundred and twenty feet in height; and the space included in it was so ample, that it had triple porticos a mile in length [*porticus miliarias*], and a lake like a sea, surrounded with buildings which had the appearance of a city. Within its area were cornfields, vineyards, pastures, and woods, containing a vast number of animals of various kinds, both wild and tame. In other parts it was entirely overlaid with gold, and adorned with jewels and mother-of-pearl. The supper rooms were vaulted, and compartments of the ceilings, inlaid with ivory, were made to revolve, and scatter flowers; while a device sprinkled sweet oils on the guests. But of all these rooms, the principal banquet chamber was the finest, being made circular, and revolving perpetually, both night and day, in the manner of the celestial bodies. The baths flowed with salt water derived from the sea and the Albula. Upon the dedication of this magnificent house after it was finished, all he said in approval of it was, "that he had now a dwelling fit for a man." (Suetonius, *Nero* 31, trans. Thomson).

Tacitus describes the palace thus:

> Nero meanwhile availed himself of his country's desolation, and erected a mansion in which the jewels and gold, long familiar objects, quite vulgarized by our extravagance, were not so marvelous as the fields and lakes, with woods on one side to resemble a wilderness, and, on the other, open spaces and extensive views. The directors and contrivers of the work were Severus and Celer, who had the genius and the audacity to attempt by art even what nature had refused, and to fool away an emperor's resources. (*Annals* 15.42)

Although these reports give a different impression, the Domus Aurea building project was in fact never quite finished. Still, it is plausible that an overall plan or a model of the Domus Aurea project existed, or that the courtiers gained a good impression of the intended look of the complex from the *princeps*' comments about it. Despite uncertainty about details, we can reconstruct with some confidence the dimensions of the palace area (Plate 1 and Figure 19.3). It stretched along the northern part of the Palatine Hill, the so-called Velia, the north side of the Oppian Hill, reaching to the municipal border on the Servian Wall in the east and to the territory around the Caelian Hill, including the Temple of Claudius, in the south (see Essen (1954) 1–12; Anderson (1985) 499–509; Cassatella (1995) 49–50; Fraioli (2007) 85–108).

It is not certain what happened to the unfinished Domus Aurea after Nero's death. It is said that one of the first official acts of Otho (AD 68–69), who had been one of Nero's partisans, was to sign for a loan of 5,000,000 sesterces to ensure the completion of the palace (Suetonius, *Otho* 7.1). Vitellius (AD 69), however, although usually a

Figure 19.3 Octagonal hall in the Domus Aurea. *Source*: ©2012 DAIR.

follower of Nero, found that Nero had lived "inadequately"; his wife Galeria Fundana even made mocking remarks about the lack of comfort in Nero's "Golden House" (Dio 65.4.1). Vespasian (AD 69–79) did everything he could to distance himself from Nero and his gigantic building project by building an amphitheater, three gladiatorial schools, and accompanying storage rooms over large parts of this area – in particular where the lake was supposed to have been – in order to turn the area into public space (Suetonius, *Vespasian* 9). In addition, baths in a wing of a building which had probably also belonged to the Domus Aurea were rebuilt and made available to the public: the sculptures and paintings from the Domus Aurea, which Nero had taken from Greece and Asia Minor in a large-scale operation, were also publicly exhibited in the Forum Pacis.

Because of later building activity, only a few of those structures in the area of the Domus Aurea, which "seemed like cities," remain. Most of what has survived belonged to the part of the Domus Aurea which was located on the side of the Oppian Hill (Plates 1 and 2), believed to have been the main building of the complex. At present, however, the exact dimension of the building complex and the shape of its layout are not yet known (for interpretations of the complex and for further literature, see Bergmann (1993) and Ball (2003)). L. Fabbrini, who has thoroughly investigated the complex and also uncovered a part of its upper floor, assumes that the palace consisted of two big polygonal yards, a central section, in which an octagonal hall was situated (Figure 19.3), as well as an east and west wing (Fabbrini (1982) 5–24; (1983) 169–84; (1985–6)

129–79). Accordingly, the building would have had a length of about 330m and in its depth reached over the Oppian Hill.

If Nero can be considered the initiator of the Domus Aurea, the design and construction management can be attributed to the ingenious architects Severus and Celer. They knew how to integrate parts of the building already in existence, undamaged by the fire, into new constructions, in order to create a substructure (*basis villae*) for the principal floor, as was common for Roman mansions. The few remains – two small peristyles with fountains, as well as the short side of a larger water basin surrounded by columns – of the otherwise destroyed upper floor on top of the Oppian Hill, show that we may place the *piano nobile* (i.e. the best rooms) of the palace complex here. Dimension, design, and development of this principal floor, however, cannot be defined in any greater detail: we can gain only a vague idea of what the complex might have looked like from the better preserved mansions on the Bay of Naples (Mielsch (1987) 136–7). The basement features quite differently spaced groups of rooms, resulting from the aforementioned integration of older buildings. The central wing, however, which is situated between two polygonal yards and has an octagonal hall of about 14m in diameter at its centre, is obviously a well-thought-out ensemble of rooms. On five sides, the octagonal hall features rectangular exedras, four of which were suitable for the arrangement of *klinai* (couches). The fifth contained a water pool and cascades, which were fed from the upper floor (no longer extant). The pool and cascades define the ensemble of rooms around the octagonal domed hall as a nymphaeum.

Because of the surviving imprints of marble cladding, which reached up to the edge of the dome, and the fact that the dome itself does not show any further remains of decoration or painting, we can assume that it was decorated with precious timber, mother of pearl, and ivory. Accordingly, the octagonal hall and its dome are often associated with the passage of Suetonius quoted above, where the main dining room is described as a rotunda, revolving like the celestial bodies in the manner of the world (*vice mundi*) night and day (*Nero* 31). Rotation was made possible by movable wooden cladding, hooked to the dome, which showed the motions of the stars. This mechanism is comparable to the paneled ceilings from which perfume and flowers could be scattered mentioned by Petronius (*Satyrica* 60). It was therefore similar to the revolving installations already in existence in the domed halls of republican mansions, such as the aviary in Varro's mansion, where stars were applied onto a mechanical system (Varro 3.5, 9–17; cf. Prückner and Storz (1971) 323–39; Moormann (1998) 354–5).

Of the ancient judgments on the Domus Aurea, what has survived is mostly pejorative critique, in opposition to the construction of such a huge park complex within a crowded city. Yet for the interpretation of Nero's conceptualization of rule, the Domus Aurea is crucial. The question of whether the complex should be understood as a particularly lavish Roman mansion, providing maximum luxury, or as an imitation of Hellenistic and oriental palaces and their ornamental gardens informs our perspective on Nero's building activities (see further Mratschek in this volume). From its beginnings, however, the Roman villa itself progressively combined the agrarian part of the old manors with the concept of Hellenistic luxury living, so that since the late Republic high-end specifications and luxurious features had become the norm in Roman villas.

In a seminal essay Hans Peter L'Orange interpreted the Domus Aurea as the palace of a "solar cosmocrator," whose colossal statue in the vestibule, together with the generous use of gold, should be understood programmatically (L'Orange (1942) 68–100;

cf. Bergmann and Mratschek in this volume). He interpreted the hall with the ceiling that revolved "like the celestial bodies" as a portrayal of the motion of the luminaries and an equivalent to the throne rooms of the Parthians and Sassanids, which are known from description only. He even suggested that the hall was depicted in the domed pavilion architecture on a Neronian coin, whose inscription MAC AUG others normally read as "*macellum* [market] of the *princeps*." In turn, some scholars have seen the incidence of light into the ocular of the octagon of the dome as symbolic, or suggested that the pavilion architecture of the aforementioned coinage is the upper floor of the octagon, emphasizing particular typological similarities to Al Khazneh (Treasury) of Petra (Voisin (1987); Hemsoll (1990)). This has led to the conclusion that Nero incorporated Ptolemaic palace architecture and symbols of power into the Domus Aurea. Others see the Domus Aurea as an idealized portrayal of the cosmos and a stage for remaking the world. In contrast, Jocelyn C. Toynbee among others has proclaimed that the Domus Aurea was nothing but a particularly lavish luxury mansion and that the Apollo/Sol symbolism present merely alludes to Nero's fondness for singing and chariot-driving (Toynbee (1947) 132–4).

The Domus Aurea is so hard to classify and interpret because of the fact that new buildings have been built over a large part of the complex. The eastern end of the vestibule, with its threefold colonnade (the Porticus Miliaria), for instance, was demolished for the construction of the Colosseum and the Meta Sudans fountain between AD 72 and 80, while the western part disappeared under the platform of the Temple of Roma and Venus from AD 121. In this vestibule of about 600 × 300 Roman feet, a 120-feet-high bronze statue of a nude Nero as the sun god would have been erected (Medri (1996) 172–80). Between 1996 and 2000, remains of the curtain wall of the *stagnum Neronis* (lake of Nero) and the eastern end of the vestibule were dug up. The now visible structures of the vestibule show that a covered street (*via tecta*), which ran from north to south, crossed the Via Sacra here. Along it were situated a number of rooms, probably *tabernae* or storage rooms. Behind these lay further storage rooms that, due to their size, featured central columns. These storage buildings, with their different heights, divided this part of the vestibule into terraces, oriented towards the *stagnum* (Medri (1996) 180–8). The nymphaeum, more than 50m long, on the east side of the substructure of the Temple of Claudius, which drew the eye to the main building of the Domus Aurea (lying opposite), has a well-preserved foundation that was restored in Flavian and Severan times (Figure 19.1; Colini (1944) 137–46; Pavolini (2006) 29–33). The colonnades erected by Nero, which sprawl along the Via Sacra to the House of the Vestal Virgins on the forum, were also preserved and restored in the Flavian period.

The question, however, remains whether all these Neronian buildings were innovative or megalomaniac (or both)? Quite apart from our ignorance about the details, it is difficult to find a suitable point of comparison for the Domus Aurea in particular. For the Golden House clearly differs from all known types of villas or town houses. The substructure (*basis villae*) consisted of a close succession of chambers, where drinking parties were held. Similar peculiarities could have also characterized Nero's country mansions, but while these offer some helpful comparative evidence, many details still elude us. The remains of the seaside mansion at Antium are today a jumble of walls from different epochs, allowing no secure conclusion to be drawn about the layout in Neronian times (Mielsch (1987) 54–7; Lafon (2001) 231–315). Suetonius' report (*Nero* 9) that Nero settled veterans of the Praetorian Guard there, especially the wealthiest

of the *primipilares*, does not find full correspondence in the archaeological record. Only Suetonius' reference to a magnificent harbor could be linked to the pier of today, which probably goes back to Romans precursors; yet even here, there is no concrete evidence to support its dating. The same applies to the mansion near Subiaco; Mielsch (1987) 138–9; Gans (1992) 125). This estate is characterized by a number of ponds that were dammed in what was then an unusual way, and exceptional for featuring several baths. Trajan later used these artificial ponds as source for one of his water supply lines and at some distance built a new villa near today's Arcinazzo (Leppert (1973) 352–87; Mielsch (1987).

Ornaments were essential for Roman buildings. As Katharina Lorenz covers Neronian wall painting in this volume, I shall briefly outline Neronian wall and floor cladding and its ornamentation. Only a few of the buildings which can give us an idea of such embellishment can be reliably dated to the Neronian period. These are for the most part the imperial houses (i.e. buildings on the Palatine Hill), as well as the mansion in Subiaco. Here we find different forms of hybrid Corinthian capitals, featuring a variety of acanthus leaves as well as many other additions, such as the protomes (heads in frontal view) of animals. Such ornamentation uses old models in a new way and we thus find combined architectural features from both private complexes and the interiors of public buildings. In this respect, these embellishments fit well into the larger context of their construction, in synthesizing the architecture of public and private spheres. In addition, it is striking that, as is usually only the case in the décor of traditional public buildings, details are carved out distinctively on parts of Neronian buildings, both public and private, thereby providing these with a sense of monumentality (von Hesberg (2004) 64–72, figs. 94–109).

What is more, the few public buildings from the Neronian period about whose ornamental décor we *do* know something – for instance the so-called gymnasium, the baths, or the triumphal arch – feature forms and pattern that clearly contrast with earlier styles and are related to the ornamental tradition of private architecture, such as stucco (La Rocca (1992) 400–14; Riemenschneider (1986) 41–82). Apparently, here too the lines between public and private spheres blur. To give just one example: Pliny reports that under Nero, the Temple of the Fortune of Sejanus, now within the Domus Aurea and originally consecrated by King Servius, was refurbished with a transparent stone from Cappadocia, so that it was filled with light even when the doors were closed, as if the light was captured by mirrors and not let out again (*Natural History* 36.163; cf. *LTUR* II (1995) 278). Not dissimilar to Nero's revolving dining room ceiling, a penchant for surprise and effect seems to have been prominent at the time. Significantly, such novel forms were not continued in the public architecture of the subsequent Flavian era: here Corinthian capitals and the traditional forms of entablature dominated once again. Ornamentation, then, demonstrates above all how hard the craftsmen and architects of the Neronian age worked to find and express a new "semantics of form" in line with their new architectural concepts.

Conclusion

Nero's building activity in Rome shows some clear common threads. He made an effort to meet the expectations directed towards the *princeps* by building for "the people"

(Zanker (1997)). In this respect, following the example set by his predecessor Claudius, Nero focused on improving the food supply for the population and on redeveloping housing. However, he also strove, particularly within the sphere of the games (as a space suitable for communication with the *populus*) to implement a new concept of society, which distanced itself from prevailing tradition and made status groups – at least for the duration of the games – seemingly non-existent (Flaig (2003) 254–9). The design of his gymnasium and baths was meant to facilitate the dissolution of class differences and constituted an attempt to bring together different strata of society not just through watching sports, but also through competition. Nero's desire to emphasize his own position as *princeps* through his personal living quarters and residence, rather than through temples or public buildings, was an innovative ambition that fitted into his new concept of society. Thus even traditional building projects such as the temple for Nero's deified adoptive father Claudius were invested with a new semantic code, as Nero charted in its extensive park and gardens a new "Golden Age" of building. In this way several types of buildings were fundamentally redesigned. To this end, a new "semantics of form" was created, which lent expression to Nero's conceptualization of rule.

FURTHER READING

Publications on Neronian architecture in English are few and far between. See Ball (2003) on the Golden House, Kleiner (1985) on Nero's triumphal arch. Nielsen (1990) offers material on Roman baths but most publications are by French, German, and Italian scholars. See Gros (2007, second edition, in French) as well as Gros and Torelli (2007, in Italian) and von Hesberg (2005, in German).

On Nero as builder, see Elsner (1994), Scheithauer (2000, in German) and Moormann (2003).

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CHAPTER 20

Portraits of an Emperor – Nero, the Sun, and Roman *Otium*

Marianne Bergmann

Nero's Portraits

Portraits of Roman emperors served many different functions: as substitutes for the absent ruler in official contexts, as honors displayed in public places and buildings, as signs of loyalty in private homes. To these ends, emperors had official models of their portraits made, which were then distributed in the form of plaster casts and thus served as prototypes in local ateliers. The characteristic shape of such a model and its copies is called a "type." Usually, emperors had several successive portrait types made during the course of their reigns.

At least four consecutive types are known of Nero, who was adopted by Claudius in AD 50 at the age of 13 (Hiesinger (1975) 113–24 pl. 17–25; Maggi (1986) 47–51). On the one hand, these portraits chronicle the emperor's transition to adulthood; on the other hand, they reveal programmatic changes in the political sphere as well as in the self-conception of the emperor himself. A decisive step came in AD 59. Until then, Nero had been under the influence of Agrippina and his counselors, Seneca and Afranius Burrus, and thus his portraits had followed in the Augustan tradition. After this point, Nero switches to a new and independent form of self-stylization. This chapter will examine Nero's portraits and – adhering to the maxim that power requires representation – ask what messages they conveyed to his people.

Upon Nero's adoption in AD 50, a surprisingly childlike portrait type was created for the 13-year-old (Figure 20.1; Hiesinger (1975) 115 pl. 19, 25–7; 20, 29). Nero wears straight hair that falls forward and is slightly parted in the middle; in front of his ears a curved flick of hair is traced onto his cheeks. This hairstyle is in the tradition of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, which had prevailed for the past 80 years. This early portrait type is sometimes connected with togate statues, which depict Nero wearing the *bulla*,

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Figure 20.1 Nero, type 1. Paris, Louvre. Cast Göttingen. *Source*: ©Archaeological Institute of Göttingen University. Photo Stephan Eckardt.

a golden amulet worn by freeborn Roman children until they assumed the toga *virilis* as a sign of adulthood (as Nero did in AD 51) (Hiesinger (1975) pl. 29; Goette (1990) 124–5, Ba 245–6 pl. 10, 4.5). In the following years and as long as Agrippina, Seneca, and Burrus – with varying degrees of intensity – dominated politics and Nero's image, the visual stylization of the adolescent *princeps* basically remained the same. However, several subsequent new editions of the basic portrait type were made, in which his proportions and physiognomy became more mature. While we do not know for certain how many of these were issued (that has still to be determined), we can discern at least two rather similar ones. One was created upon Nero's accession to power in AD 54 (Mantua, Palazzo Ducale: Hiesinger (1975) 115 pl. 22, 35.36; Maggi (1986) figs. 1–3), the other somewhat later in the 50s AD (Figure 20.2, Cagliari: Hiesinger (1975) 114 pl. 21, 33.34).

Occasionally, portraits of these types feature youthful beards, which cover the jaws, but only on a cameo (Nancy: Megow (1987) 214 A 99 pl. 35, 3) and a marble relief in Aphrodisias (Figure 20.4, Smith (1987) 127–32 pl. 24–6, p. 130 for the beard) and

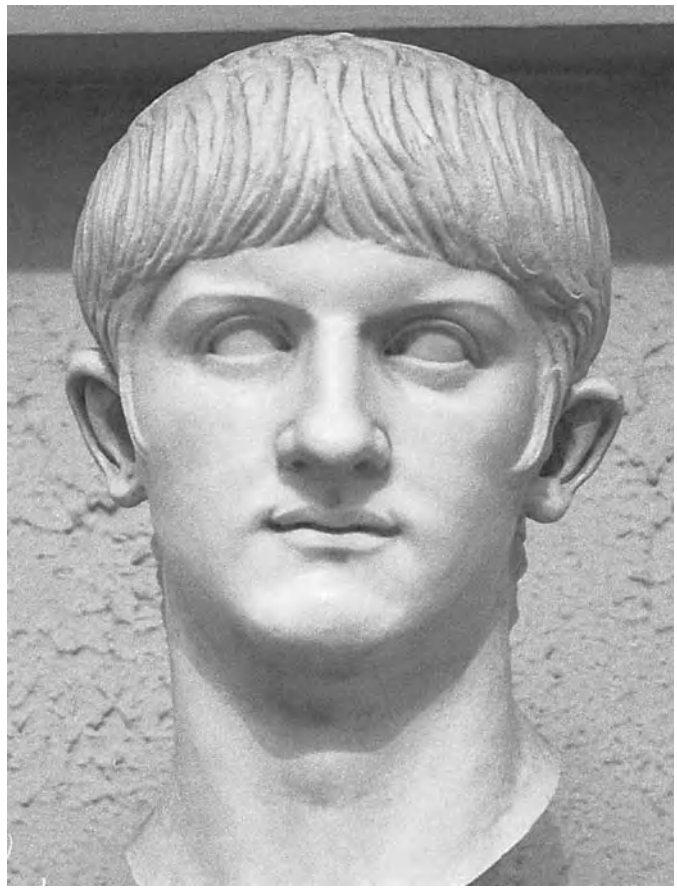

Figure 20.2 Nero, type 2. Cagliari, Museo Archeologico Nazionale. Cast Museo della Civiltà Romana, Rome. *Source*: ©2012 Museo della Civiltà Romana, Rome. Photo Marianne Bergmann.

never on life-sized marble sculptures in the round. This indicates that these light beards were probably painted onto these sculptures and – where this was not possible (i.e. on cameos or bronze sculptures) or it could not be seen very well – it was rendered in relief.

The Julio-Claudian hairstyle of Nero's early portraits conveyed a definite political message. After Claudius' death, Nero was – at his mother Agrippina's instigation – preferred for the succession over Claudius' biological son Britannicus for the same reason that had allegedly influenced Claudius' marriage with Agrippina: his direct descent from the Julians (Tacitus, *Annals* 12.2; cf. Calpurnius Siculus, *Eclogues* 1.45). At the same time, it was pledged that Nero would reign according to the example set by Augustus (*ex praescripto Augusti*: Suetonius, *Nero* 10). Agrippina acted as her son's co-regent and insisted that her role be recognized befittingly. Calpurnius' line that "the Julian ancestors of his mother scored (Nero) the victory" indicates this, as does the watchword of the Praetorian Guard for the first day of Nero's reign: "excellent mother" (*optima mater*: Tacitus, *Annals* 13.2.11; Suetonius, *Nero* 9). Coins from the first years of their co-regency showcase this concept and also foreshadow the problems that were to come

Figure 20.3 Nero and Agrippina AD 54. Cast. *Source*: ©2012 Münzkabinett Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz.

(Sutherland and Carson (1984) 151f. n.1–3.6–7 pl. 17 Nero 1,6, for the succession of the two coin-types: Clay (1982) 18–19). A first series presents on the obverse the heads of Nero and Agrippina facing and as equals (Figure 20.3). Agrippina's name appears on the front and Nero's on the back of the coin. In the second series, their profiles are parallel to each other: Agrippina is now depicted behind Nero and the captions have been interchanged. Nero's name features prominently on the front of the coin.

Agrippina's role was also expressed in representations showing a symbolic scene in which she crowns the young *princeps* with a wreath. Two versions of this scene exist: one on a relief from an imperial cult complex in Aphrodisias in Asia Minor (Figure 20.4 Smith (1987) 127–32 pl. 24–6; Bergmann (1998) 152–7 pl. 30.4; 31.1), the other on a cameo now set in the Shrine of the Three Magi at Cologne Cathedral, which was likely produced in a workshop in metropolitan Rome (Figure 20.5, Megow (1987) 213 A 98 pl. 35, 1.2; Zwierlein-Diehl (1998) nr.1; Bergmann (1998) 152–7 pl. 30, 1.2). The basic idea expressed here is identical in both cases and the figures of Agrippina almost fully correspond with one another. The dress and the attributes of the emperor, however, are different. On the relief, he appears in standard military uniform, whereas on the cameo he is presented in the guise of Zeus/Jupiter and with several divine attributes. I will return later to the different semantic levels employed for the representation of the emperor. For now, it is important to note that before AD 59 Nero's direct descent from Augustus and Agrippina's role are strongly emphasized: a point also reflected in Nero's early portrait types.

Very soon into his reign, Nero found the overbearing influence of Agrippina and his counselors, especially their political visions and lifestyle expectations for him, to be a nuisance and he repeatedly sought to free himself from them. In AD 59 Nero had his mother assassinated and in AD 62 his advisor Afranius Burrus died. Nero also eliminated his first wife Octavia, Claudius' daughter, and welcomed Seneca's retirement from politics.

Figure 20.4 Nero and Agrippina. Aphrodisias, Sebasteion. *Source*: Courtesy of New York University Excavations at Aphrodidias.

Figure 20.5 Nero and Agrippina. Cameo. Cologne, Shrine of the Three Magi. *Source*: Photo ©Dombauarchiv Köln, Matz und Schenk.

The emperor was now more invested in his own self-fulfillment and expressed this immediately through a new portrait design. Coin evidence allows us to date this new type to AD 59 and the succeeding one to AD 64 (on the dating, see the Further Reading section).

Nero now broke with the long-prevailing fashion for straight hair and began to wear a hairstyle that featured a row of parallel, sickle-shaped strands of hair at the front, which changed direction above the corner of the right eye. Above this a shallower row of sickle-shaped strands ran in the opposite direction, with a line forming a crest where both rows meet (Figure 20.6, Rome, Museo Palatino: Hiesinger (1975) 119 pl. 21, 33–4). It was a coiffure that had to be styled by a hairdresser with a curling iron. In addition, Nero wore his hair rather long in the neck, combed to the front on either side. His physiognomy underwent an astonishing transformation. Although only 21 years old in AD 58, the emperor had himself portrayed as fleshy-faced and with already jaded eyes. Occasionally on this type a slight beard appears too, which covers the jaws.

In AD 64 Nero's new image was defined even more sharply (Figure 20.7, Munich, Glyptothek: Bergmann and Zanker (1981) 326–7 fig. 9a–d; cf. the replicas ibid. fig. 10.11; Hiesinger (1975) 120–2 pl. 25). The two rows of sickle-shaped strands of hair running across the forehead become narrower and run in only one direction each, thus looking even more artificial. At the same time, the emperor ostentatiously confessed to a life of indulgence as visually expressed through fatness, a double chin, and small eyes sunk into the surrounding flesh. On coins he is now often – though not always – shown

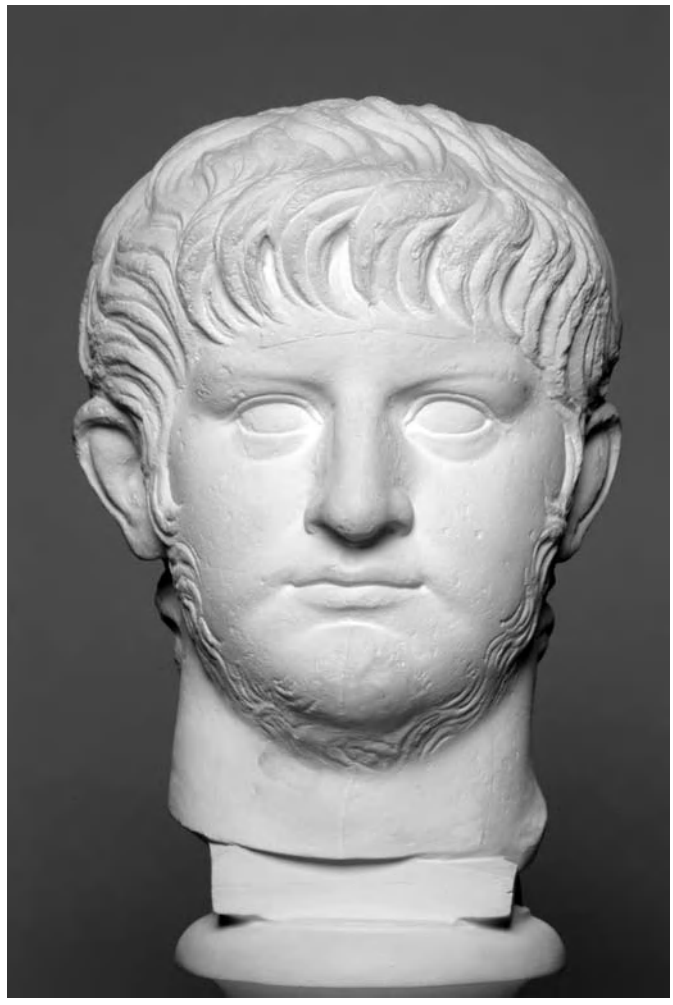

Figure 20.6 Nero, type 3. Rome, Museo Palatino. Cast Göttingen. *Source*: ©Archaeological Institute of Göttingen University. Photo Stephan Eckardt.

with a short downy beard covering his whole jaw (see below, Figure 20.14). On his portraits in the round this is nearly never seen. We must conclude for this later portrait type, more than for the preceding ones, Nero wore a beard that covered large parts of his cheeks. However, it was so thin that it would be painted onto marble portraits, an option not available to the cutters of coin dies, who had to decide whether to carve these details into the dies or leave them out entirely. In any case, one has to assume that initially Nero only wore a slight beard on his cheeks, a common practice for adolescents and young men before their first ritual shaving. By the time of his last portrait type, however, the emperor was depicted with "designer stubble."

The superimposed rows of waved strands of hair divided by crests were called "steps" (*gradus* in Latin), and Suetonius later deplored their appearance on Nero as an "embarrassing hairstyle" (*adeo pudendus, ut comam semper in gradus formatam . . .*:

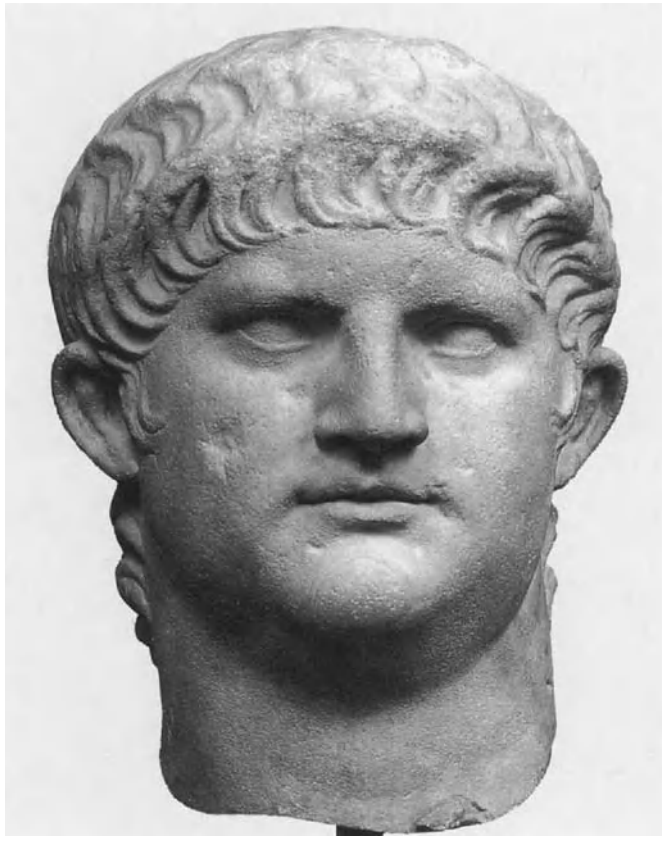

Figure 20.7 Nero, type 4. Munich Glyptothek. *Source*: ©2012 Glyptothek Munich.

Suetonius, *Nero* 51). Before him this style is more or less unknown on sculpted portraits. That is why scholars have looked for special explanations for this distinctive hairstyle, often also in association with more extensive readings of Nero. H. P. L'Orange's suggestion that it "cites" Hellenistic coiffures has been recognized as problematic for some time (L'Orange (1942b); reprint (1973) 285–91; L'Orange (1947) 54–63). J. M. C. Toynbee's argument that it reflects the professional hairstyle of stage artists and charioteers, because portraits of charioteers wearing this coiffure have survived from the Neronian and Flavian periods (1947: 137), has been refuted: research has shown that the latter were simply wearing the fashionable hairstyles of their times.

We do know from written sources, however, about this hairstyle and beard as well as the status and social perception of the individuals who wore them (first collected by Cain (1993), 58–68; 79–95). Coiffures made with curling irons and ringlets were already worn by men in the late republican and Augustan periods, but were considered to be effeminate and therefore vulgar. As Ovid puts it, "don't torture your hair with curling irons and don't pumice your legs into smoothness . . . the ungroomed look becomes a man" (*forma viros neglecta decet*: *Ars Amatoria* 1, 505–6, 9). A central testimony is Seneca's *De Brevitate Vitae*, written around AD 49, where he describes exaggerated and therefore objectionable behaviors connected with the cultivated lifestyle of *otium*

(for *otium*, see the section headed "Interpreting Nero in Context," below): to pass hours with the hairdresser and grow annoyed when some strands are misplaced or do not form the right *anuli* (ringlets). As Seneca asks, "who of them would not prefer the state to be in disorder than their hair?" (12.3). And even in the late first century, when *the gradus* and *anuli* coiffures were *en vogue* among men and evidently publicly accepted, the rhetorician Quintilian (*Institutio Oratoria* 12.10.47) sniped "I agree that the hair should be well cut, but not that it should be dressed in waves and ringlets [*grados atque anulos*]" and: "if one would follow the taste of the masses, it would also be acceptable to stylize the hair into *gradus* and to waste your time in baths." The same applies to beard styles. The short beards worn by young Romans before their first ritual shaving (no matter how much this practice may have been purely symbolic) were of course acceptable: these youngsters were even called *iuvenes barbatuli* (small-bearded youths). At the same time, however, stylized fashionable beards were worn, yet these were perceived as luxuries due to the time and intensive care their maintenance required (on beards, see esp. Cain (1993) 100–4).

Nero's late portrait types suggest, then, that as soon as Nero freed himself from the shadow of his mother and his counselors Burrus and Seneca, he crafted his own luxury hair- and beard-styles. Though those styles had been known, they were deemed until then unseemly for men with aspirations to dignity and were thus considered inappropriate for use in portraiture. Therefore Nero's new coiffures and beard represented not only a break with dynastic tradition, but also an endorsement of luxurious self-grooming. The depiction of his fat face, however, demonstrates that for Nero *pleasure* – and not the production of abstract beauty – was the message he intended to send.

Corpulence did not become prevalent as a visual ideal. But Nero's hair- and beard-styles seem to have fulfilled a widespread desire for new forms of self-representation after the 80 years of classicizing portraiture under the Julio-Claudian family, which had dominated the general taste in portraiture. Indeed, in a more moderate way, Nero's style of hair and beard persisted after his death as it was worn by the emperors Titus and Domitian as well. As before, however, the beard rarely appeared on their portraits on statues but often on those on coins. Depictions of non-imperial subjects on state reliefs from the time of the Flavians and of Trajan, such as on Trajan's Column in Rome, show how these fashions subsequently became widely popular. The hair- and beard-styles of the emperor Hadrian (117–138) directly follow from this fashion and, in the context of the Graeco-mania of the second century, he also became a pioneer for even more luxurious fashions. This development suggests that Nero's self-stylization in the years after AD 59 not only marks an altered understanding of his own role, but also is closely linked to a process of change within the Roman value system as a whole: it expressed it in an exaggerated way, but it was soon accepted by the wider public.

Memoria Damnata. The Removal of Nero's Portraits after his Death

In the end Nero was declared a public enemy (Suetonius, *Nero* 49), which meant that his decrees were revoked and his portraits were destroyed or removed from public places.

Figure 20.8 Nero, Dupondius with destruction marks. Bonn, Akademisches Kunstmuseum. *Source*: ©2012 Akademisches Kunstmuseum Bonn.

As had happened before in the case of Caligula, the imperial statues were often reused and portrait heads were remodeled to match subsequent rulers, so that even today Nero's hairstyle can be spotted on the back of the portraits of his successors (Bergmann and Zanker (1981); cf. Varner (2004) 51 fig. 45). The standardized body-types of Roman portrait statues and busts made such remodeling technically and conceptually unproblematic. Personal hatred of the dead emperor even led some individuals to hack at his image on coins (see Figure 20.8, Zedelius (1979)). Moreover the process of *memoria damnata* provides us with fascinating insights into the mechanisms of imperial portrait removal and desecration. Proportionally, many more portraits of Nero from his later years were destroyed than those of his youth, when the emperor was still seen as the great young hope (Varner, E. R. (2004); on the numbers of Nero's cameos, see Bergmann (2008) 20–1).

The Comparison of Nero with Apollo and the Sun God

At the beginning of Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis*, a satire on the death and apotheosis of Claudius, which was probably written in AD 54, the Fates spin golden threads of fate for Nero and for a Golden Age. Apollo accompanies them on the lyre and reminds them not to restrict the years of Nero's life:

> Like me in face and lovely grace, like me in voice and song, he'll bid the laws at length speak out that have been dumb so long, will give unto the weary world years prosperous and bright, like as the daystar from on high scatters the stars of night, as, when the stars return again, clear Hesper brings his light, or as the ruddy dawn drives out the dark, and

> brings the day, as the bright sun looks on the world, and speeds along its way his rising car from morning's gates: so Caesar doth arise, so Nero shows his face to Rome; his bright and shining countenance illumines all the air, while down upon his graceful neck fall rippling waves of hair. (trans. Rouse)

This image of the sun-like emperor was to accompany Nero his whole life, but already its first appearance in the *Apocolocyntosis* makes visible a problem, which posterity has debated extensively. Was this comparison with Apollo supposed to recall Nero's fondness for music? Did it serve to outline his reign as a Golden Age, with obvious reference to the panegyric of the Augustan era? Or are we meant to see Nero himself as a god? The same questions have been prompted about other emperors because of their comparison with gods and similar metaphors in contemporary literature (see Mratschek in this volume).

The comparison of ancient rulers with gods and the theomorphic image of Roman emperors

The comparison of rulers – both living and deceased – with Zeus/Jupiter are frequent in Hellenistic poetry and imperial literature. They describe their function as rulers of the world in poetic form. Representations that depict rulers in the guise and/or with attributes of gods served the same function. For reasons of simplification they are nowadays all referred to as "theomorphic." In contrast to texts, pictorial representations cannot normally tell us whether they are meant metaphorically, as points of comparison, or whether they are meant to identify explicitly the ruler with the god whose attributes he carries. Consequently they are often understood in the sense of an identification of ruler and god. It has even been argued that all pictorial and verbal expressions which connect rulers and gods – be they comparisons, metaphors or allusions in poetry, theomorphic pictorial representations, or ruler cults – similarly testify to an ancient perception of the divinity of the ruler. In other words, they are thought to express the ontological status of the emperor (Clauss (1999)).

Despite the fact that the emperors were honored with cults outside Rome (Price (1984)), there is however good reason to believe that these literary and pictorial expressions had a comparative and panegyric character. For the theomorphic representations it may be mentioned that rulers were often represented with the attributes of several gods at once, which excludes their exact identification, and that non-imperial persons and especially children were frequently represented in this way as well (see Further Reading section). Another important argument is that the comparisons and "assimilations" of mortal beings with and to gods function like vocabulary. They have a simple verbal meaning, but the central aspect of their meaning is revealed by the way in which they are employed. Their usage follows rules, which make it clear that theomorphic representations and similar phenomena in poetry are not intended to describe an ontological status of the represented persons; rather, they have a panegyrical and honorific character. Among the Roman emperors, Nero is the best example for recognizing these (unwritten) rules, as well as their possibilities of expansion and of diachronic development.

This is not to say that comparing a Roman emperor to a god was not potentially precarious. Emperors of the Principate were in some sense monarchical, but also *primi*

inter pares (first amongst equals) with the Senate. In official contexts and in Rome, the fiction of the emperor as the first senator was (to a great extent) maintained. In poetry, on the other hand, anything was possible, because it was regarded as nothing more than poetry. Consequently theomorphic imagery, which corresponded to poetry, was avoided in official contexts. In homage to the emperor, however, it was used outside of Rome and/or in contexts and media such as precious cut stones, which by definition were not official declarations about the emperor but panegyrical and poetic like poetry itself.

From this perspective we can appreciate why quite a number of cameos show the young Nero with attributes or in the pose of Jupiter (those of Nero's later years have almost all been destroyed) (Megow (1987) pl. 34, 6.11; 35, 1.3; Bergmann (2008)). On the other hand, imperial cult, posthumous or outside of Rome, could depict theomorphic as well as conventional images of the emperors in their togas (Figure 20.12) or cuirasses (Figure 20.4).

The comparison of Nero with Apollo and the sun god – meanings and associations

The comparison of Nero with Apollo, who also was the sun god, had three different meanings. Since Virgil's fourth *Eclogue*, Apollo/Sol was the presiding deity of the Golden Age. Thus the comparison of the emperor to Apollo/Sol was intended to indicate that emperor's future or current reign as a Golden Age. In this sense Apollo/Sol had been the main deity of Augustus (Zanker (1987); Miller (2009)) and the Augustan connotation always accompanied the comparison. Finally, for Nero there was another, more personal connection: the Apollo/Sol comparison suited his penchant for singing and chariot-driving.

All these aspects of the comparison were present throughout the whole period of Nero's reign. However, there was a change in the way this comparison was employed, one conditioned by a more or less strict adherence to the fiction of the Principate, which defined the emperor's role as that of a magistrate and not a monarch. Thus in Nero's early years the comparison was certainly present, but only in ''unofficial'' contexts and media which were not overtly political or that represented an interpretation of the *princeps*' role by the Senate. These early comparisons were simply panegyrical and poetic. Towards the end of his reign, however, such boundaries were expanded. The Apollo/Sol comparison was not only conspicuous in the Colossus of Nero, but also in the migration of some of its imagery into official sculptures and portraits of the emperor whilst remaining (nearly) compatible with the idea of the Principate.

The comparison of Nero with Apollo and the sun in the early years of his reign

The comparison of Nero with Apollo/Sol as the god of the Golden Age was, as Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* demonstrates, propagated right from the beginning of Nero's reign. Such literary imagery was grounded in the difficult situation accompanying the change of government. The questionable circumstances surrounding Claudius' death, the fact

that the adopted son had definitely been chosen over Britannicus, and the youthful age of the new *princeps* – Nero was just 17 upon his accession – gave cause for concern. To counteract all of this, a concerted program of public image production, which in this case may be called "propaganda," was mobilized. Also, Claudius' deification was meant to express the Senate's approval of the deceased's choice of his successor (Gesche (1978) 377). Nero's claim to the throne was further cemented by his direct descent from Augustus through Agrippina and the promise of a reign consistent with that of the much-revered first emperor. The poetic equivalent of a renewed Augustan reign was the return of the Golden Age under the aegis of Apollo/Sol. Poetry thus celebrated Nero's accession in this way and pursued this connection throughout his later years by way of quotations of, and allusions to, Augustan writers (cf. Calpurnius Siculus, esp. *Eclogues* 1 and 4 and *Carmina Einsidlensia* 2.22.23 which quotes Virgil's fourth eclogue; see Henderson in this volume). By comparing Nero with Apollo/Sol, his adolescence as well as his musical ambition could even be positively acknowledged and celebrated, without taking center-stage.

Given that Seneca wrote Nero's early orations (cf. the funeral oration for Claudius: Tacitus, *Annals* 13.3), it is quite possible that he was also the architect of this poetic program, which appears already fully developed in the *Apocolocyntosis*. In addition, such literary propaganda would not have been confined to court circles as poetry was also read in the schools. Yet in official sculptures and portraits no such imagery can be found. Thus on the coinage of the years AD 54 to 59, the imagery of the *princeps* conforms to the fiction that the emperor is just a magistrate. Coin reverses often show the oak wreath with the letters SC (Figure 20.3; Sutherland and Carson (1984) 150–1 pl. 17 Nero, Rome 1; pl. 18, Nero, Rome 17), an honor bestowed upon the emperor by the Senate. Only in private or provincial initiatives to honor the *princeps* can an approach similar to the strategies of poetic panegyric be seen and thus must be understood as reflecting them.

The comparison of the relief in Aphrodisias (Figure 20.4), on which Agrippina crowns the young Nero with a wreath, to the cameo at the Shrine of the Three Magi at Cologne Cathedral (Figure 20.5), is exemplary. On the cameo the very same scene we see on the relief is presented in a much more mythical form. Stripped to the waist with aegis and Zeus's/Jupiter's cloak, Nero sits on a throne, under which the god's eagle perches. In his left arm he holds the stern ornament of a ship, a typical attribute of Poseidon/Neptune. Above his head is a star, which represents the sun on account of its voluminous center. Nero is thus characterized as master of land and sea, like Zeus/Jupiter and Poseidon/Neptune and, through the sunstar above his head, he figures also as the bringer of the Golden Age. In addition, Agrippina bears not only a cornucopia (as on the relief at Aphrodisias), but also the grain of Demeter/Ceres, which is attached to her wreath. The comparison of the two thematically identical portrayals outlines different levels of "speaking about" the *princeps*. The relief in Aphrodisias reflects an image as it might have appeared in Rome on official monuments dedicated by the people and the Senate (*senatus populusque*) to the *princeps*. On the cameo the image is translated into the Hellenistic theomorphic language, which functioned analogously to panegyric poetry. Valuables such as this cameo were given as tribute to emperors, were bestowed by emperors as a gift or collected by their entourage. They reveal an unofficial, poetic-panegyric conceptualization of the emperor. Occasionally we find reflections of

this panegyric on coins from the provinces, which were minted on local initiative and on which the young *princeps* was depicted with a sunstar or a radiate crown such as those from Kidrama in Asia Minor and the Roman colony of Knossos (Burnett, Amandry, and Ripollès (1992) 239 no. 1005.1006 pl. 56; 473 no. 2880 pl. 124; Bergmann (1998) 150–1 pl. 29, 5; 164–6 pl. 33, 3).

Of particular interest are the highly programmatic, well-composed series of Alexandrian coins from Nero's early years that were commissioned by the prefect of Egypt, Tiberius Julius Balbillus (Geissen (1974) 46–57 no.113–47, sitting figure ibid. nr.121. 137 with figs.; Bergmann (1998) 157–64 pl. 32, 1–13; Bergmann (2000); Noeske (2004)). They contain a series of images and legends on the reverse sides of the coins, which allude to the young Nero's familial credentials (the link to his great-grandfather Augustus thus manifests in Nero's epithet *Propapposebasteios*) to the relationship between Egypt and Rome and the beneficent and fertility-bringing power of the new ruler. Within this rich program there is also the reverse of a coin showing a clothed sitting figure that, according to a rare but known typology, extends a scroll. This figure also wears a radiate crown (Figure 20.9). This imagery follows coin types of the living (Figure 20.10; Rich and Williams (1999); Abdy and Harling (2005)) and of the deified Augustus (Figure 20.11; Sutherland and Carson (1984) 97 no. 49). The radiate crown and the thunderbolt, with which Divus Augustus is often portrayed on coins (Figures 20.11 and 20.12; Sutherland and Carson (1984) 98–9; 112 no. 56; 128 no. 101), recall the frequent poetic *topos* that the deceased emperor controls the well-being of the earth from the firmament like the sun god and Jupiter at once (Lucan, *Civil War* 1, 45–59; Statius, *Thebaid* 1, 24–31; see also Zwierlein (1980) 39–42; Bergmann (1998) 103–7). The legend of this Alexandrian coin-type *PRONOIA NEOU SEBASTOU* praises the *pronoia* (''providence'') of the emperor. That this emperor is not Augustus but Nero is made clear by his coiffure and his title *Neos Sebastos* (''new Augustus''). The coin-type

Figure 20.9 Nero, Alexandria AD 56/7–59/60. *Source*: ©2012 Marianne Bergmann.

Figure 20.10 Augustus, Aureus LEGES ET IURA PR RESTITUIT. Cast, private collection. *Source*: ©2012 Institut für Archäologische Wissenschaften, Abt.II, Frankfurt.

Figure 20.11 Divus Augustus, Sesterce of Tiberius. *Source*: ©2012 Marianne Bergmann.

probably commemorates Nero's issuance of a decree providing benefits for Egypt, which was greatly celebrated in that country. That the *praefectus Aegypti* used the image of the sun-like emperor, which appeared in the panegyrical language of Rome for the young Nero, may have had a special reason: there are reasons to believe that Tiberius Julius Balbillus belonged to Agrippina's circle as well as Seneca, where this panegyric imagery had been developed. In general, one can also state that this Alexandrian coin type communicates on two different levels: for while it speaks on behalf of the government of

Figure 20.12 Divus Augustus. As. *Source*: ©2012 Marianne Bergmann.

the Roman empire, it also speaks from the more distant remove of a province, where the consideration of the *princep*'s role within the Principate was not considered as narrowly defined as in Rome itself.

Nero's solar imagery in the later years of his reign

Freeing himself from his mother and his early counselors allowed Nero to realize his own ideas and project his own conceptualization of the emperor's role, part of which was the use of monarchical pomp that was at times excessive. Projects like the colossal statue of Nero planned for the Domus Aurea or the "golden day" (*dies aureus*) held for the crowning of the Armenian king Tiridates (cf. D. Braund in this volume) as well as some of Nero's gigantic technical projects demonstrate how sheer magnitude and lavishness could play a simple but efficient role in disseminating an image of Nero as emperor. In this context, the tenor of the way in which the Senate in Rome spoke about the emperor and the emperor spoke about himself became more ambitious This change did not concern so much the poetry, with its traditionally lofty tenor. But now imperial portraits began to be used in official contexts that – analogous to poetry – implied a comparison between emperor and god. After the discovery of the Pisonian conspiracy in AD 65, the Senate went so far as to offer to establish a cult for Nero during his lifetime, which the emperor declined with the comment that this could be a bad omen since a cult (in Rome) was not appropriate before an emperor's death (Tacitus, *Annals* 15.97).

Although this illustrates how much the Senate tended to surrender to monarchical claims, the approach to Apolline and solar imagery demonstrates how both the Senate and the emperor expanded – but did not break with – the iconographic customs of the Principate. Thus in AD 66, when Nero bestowed a royal diadem upon the Parthian

Tiridates (see D. Braund in this volume) on a gilded stage in the theater of Pompeius, the emperor was portrayed on the awning of the theater riding a chariot across a starry sky in the manner of the sun god (Dio Cassius 62(63) 6.2). This certainly did not correspond to the sober role of a *princeps* and was instigated by the *princeps* himself; the placing of the picture on an awning and the festive context must, however, have given this representation a panegyrical-poetic rather than serious character. For his part, Tiridates certainly got the panegyric message of the awning: he chose to greet the emperor diplomatically in Hellenistic terms as "my god" (rather than "god," as everyone was allowed to have "their own gods"). Furthermore, he declared he would kneel before the emperor, as he would before Mithras, studiously leaving open the extent of this comparison (Dio Cassius 62(63) 5.2).

Suetonius (*Nero* 25.2) furthermore reports that there were statues of Nero dressed as a cithara player, which he had allegedly erected in AD 67 or 68 after his triumphant return from the musical contests and chariot races at the Greek games, and which he also commemorated on coins. One could conjecture that Nero was portrayed as Apollo in these representations. But it has long been known that coins with a singing *kitharoedus* on their reverse were minted before Nero went to Greece (cf. Sutherland and Carson (1984) 156. 158 no. 73 ff. pl. 18; 174 no. 380.381 pl. 21 and passim) and that they do not represent Nero but rather an Apollo with a god's coiffure. The singer's strained posture, however, makes it understandable why his contemporaries thought that the figure represented Nero. Maybe this misperception also applied to statues of this type.

Less spectacular but still important as a sign for the widening of the unwritten iconographic "rules" of the Principate is the fact that in the years AD 64–68 Hellenistic and god-like attributes started to accompany the portrait of the emperor on the obverse of imperial coinage, which traditionally had strictly observed the iconographic limits. This too suggests a shift in the tenor of official depictions of the emperor, as the anecdote about the Senate's offer of a cult to Nero also attests. Obverses of imperial coinage now showed the emperor with the attributes of a world ruler: with a globe or the aegis of Zeus/Jupiter (from the Hellenistic tradition and previously appearing only as an attribute of emperors on cameos) and the radiate crown (Figure 20.13), which – modeled on the sun god – had also been an attribute of Divus Augustus (and Divus Claudius) (Zwierlein (1980); Bergmann (1998) 102–23). The latter is significant because it was introduced for Nero as an explicit citation of Divus Augustus: portraits of Nero with the radiate crown on the obverse featured on the same coin denominations on which the effigy of Divus Augustus with a radiate crown (Figure 20.12) had been minted continuously since AD 14. The most likely explanation for this phenomenon is that the Senate suggested or decided to confer an honor upon Nero during his lifetime which Augustus had only received after his death: that is, to erect or produce effigies of the emperor with the radiate crown (Bergmann (1998) 118–19). Perhaps the Senate even proposed to have coins minted on which the emperor bore this attribute, as is likely for Divus Augustus.

The same Augustan aura surrounds two full-figure representations of Nero with the radiate crown on two coin reverses from the years AD 64–66 (on what follows, see Sutherland and Carson (1984) 153 nos. 44–6; 56.57 pl. 18; MacDowall 32–4 pl. 1, 22.23; Bergmann (1998) 175–81 with further references). On one of them, Nero (who is clearly recognizable by his coiffure on some dies) is represented dressed in

Figure 20.13 Nero, AD 64–68. *Source*: ©2012 Marianne Bergmann.

Figure 20.14 Nero / AUGUSTUS GERMANICUS, AD 64–66. *Source*: ©2012 Marianne Bergmann.

a toga, holding a branch in the right hand and a Victoria with a tropaion in the other, and wearing a radiate crown (Figure 20.14). The reverse legend AUGUSTUS GERMANICUS is a continuation of Nero's name NERO CAESAR on the obverse. The image refers to Corbulo's victory over the Parthians in AD 63 that forced Tiridates of Armenia to lay down his princely diadem in order for him to receive it later from Nero in Rome (see D. Braund in this volume). This success was celebrated as an achievement similar to the restitution of Roman standards from the Parthians in 19 BC, which had been highly celebrated in the reign of Augustus. Other coin types – commemorating the Ara Pacis and the closure of the Temple of Janus (Temple of Janus: Sutherland

Figure 20.15 Nero / AUGUSTUS AUGUSTA, AD 64–66. *Source*: ©2012 Marianne Bergmann.

and Carson (1984) 153–84 passim with figs.; Ara Pacis: ibid. 176–8 passim) – served to enforce the parallels with Augustus. In this sense the reverse legend AUGUSTUS GERMANICUS was carefully chosen as well. It highlighted Nero as a second Augustus and the name Germanicus recalled Nero's other equally famous ancestor who, in AD 18, had enthroned the Armenian king Artaxias.

The coin reverse of Figure 20.15 shows – side by side and in a rigid, identical position – Nero (again easily identified by his hairstyle) with toga, radiate crown, and holding a long scepter next to a woman dressed in a chiton and cloak and holding a cornucopia, who is either Poppaea or Messalina (depending on the exact date of the coins). Both hold offering dishes (*patera*). Their rigid posture calls to mind statuary and the legends AUGUSTUS and AUGUSTA refer with unique specificity to the Augustan character of what is depicted. Full-figured images of emperors with radiate crowns, and full-figured images of emperors with divine attributes in general, were – after Nero – very rare on reverses of imperial coinage (although these attributes became increasingly conventional on the obverses). This suggests that these particular images on the reverses of Nero's coins commemorated something special, most probably honorific statues with radiate crowns, with which Nero was honored by the Senate, like the Divus Augustus before him. These monuments do not so much celebrate a sun-like monarch as they do a *princeps* who received an honor during his lifetime that Augustus had only obtained after his death. By accepting the Senate's offer of a temple and cult in Rome (see above), Nero would have cemented his move towards superhuman honors; but (wisely) he abstained.

The mythical aspect of this symbolism, however, was represented by the bronze statue of Nero, more than 30m high, which the emperor had commissioned for the vestibule of the Domus Aurea and which was meant to outshine even the Colossus of Rhodes (Suetonius, *Nero* 31; Tacitus, *Annals* 15.42; Martial, *Epigrams*, *De Spectaculis* 2). Nero's Colossus was never completed, but Vespasian erected it with the head altered so that it could watch as Apollo/Sol over yet another Golden Age, this time promised by the Flavians. Hadrian moved the statue to the front of the Temple of Venus and Roma,

Commodus then converted it into a Commodus-Hercules statue and afterwards it was turned back into the sun god again. The remains of its huge base west of the Colosseum could be seen until Mussolini's day (Lega (1989–90)), whereas today it is marked by a square platform adorned by trees. Thanks to a large number of both written and pictorial records, the Colossus can be reconstructed to a considerable extent: a naked statue that on one side leaned on a support and with the other hand held a helm steering the world

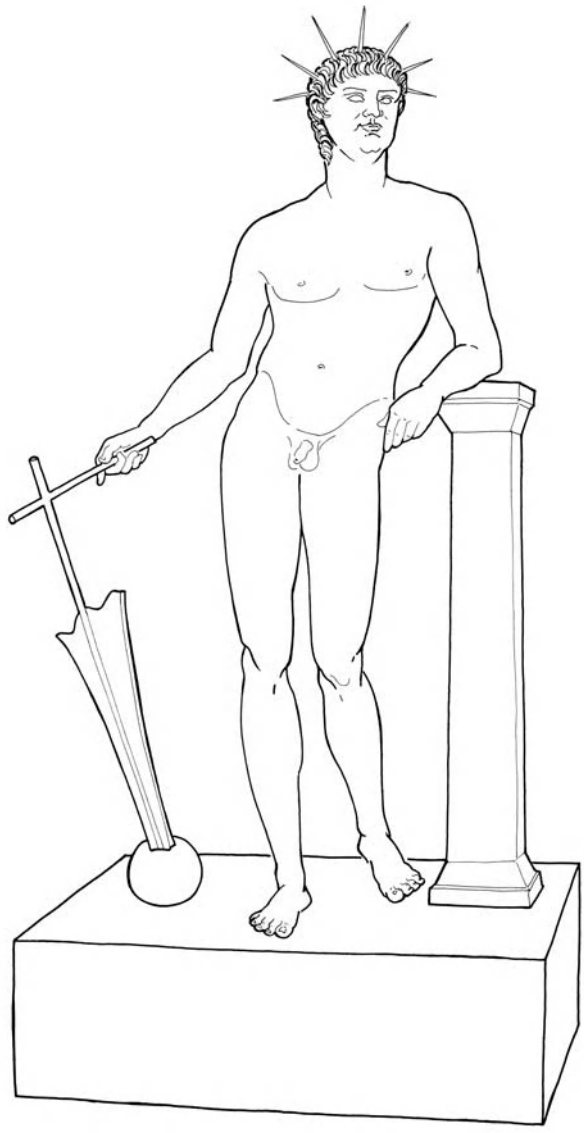

Figure 20.16 Colossus of Nero, reconstruction. Drawing S. Bertolin. *Source*: ©2012 Marianne Bergmann.

(Figure 20.16). That it portrayed Nero as the sun god is not explicitly mentioned in the sources, but is highly likely. The previous examples of Nero depicted with a radiate crown (cited above), which was employed as a solar attribute and as a honorary wreath at the same time, raise the question of how the colossal, god-like statue of Nero in the Domus Aurea is to be understood. Nero himself commissioned the colossal statue, not the Senate and/or the people. Had it been completed, would Nero have had it erected as a personal statement in his own house, or would he have expected to have it dedicated to him by the *senatus populusque*, as clients did with their patrons in the atria of their houses and *villae*? (Eck and Hesberg (2004) 149.156; cf. on the so-called L. Caecilius Iucundus, Lahusen and Formigli (2001) 163 no. 97). And would the *otium*-inspired character of the villa (cf. Beste and von Hesberg in this volume, and see "Interpreting Nero in Context," below), with its connotations of Greek education, have supported, or even encouraged, the selection of this mythical representation of the villa's owner?

The Colossus had already exceeded what was deemed appropriate in matters of imperial self-representation, but Nero's household outstripped even this. A remarkable monument is an altar for *Sol* and *Luna* (the sun and moon), which was dedicated by the slave Eumolpus, who was responsible for household goods in the Domus Aurea (Figure 20.17; Bergmann (1998) 194–201 pl. 38, 1–4). Eumolpus was also a member of the sanctuary of the Syrian Gods in Rome, where his dedication was found. The relief bust of the sun god on this altar has Neronian features, most notably a simplified version of his late hairstyle and eyes drowned in a fleshy face. However, it is unclear whether the imagery indicates that "the lovely features of the *princeps* were lent to the god," as Martial states flatteringly of a Domitian-like Hercules statue (Martial, *Epigrams* 9.101), or that the altar itself was actually meant for Nero by his slave.

Some of the significance of any pictorial strategy is defined by its impact. The radiate crown became – from the time of Nero onwards until Diocletian's coin reform – a permanent attribute of imperial portraits on the *dupondius* (a coin worth two asses), probably on the grounds that what had been granted to Nero could not possibly be denied to his successors. This attests to the honorific significance that this attribute could possess. On the reverses of the coins, however, emperors were only ever depicted with special attributes in exceptional cases, such as the Neronian examples we have discussed above. In the provinces, Nero's new attributes were only cautiously accepted, even though the imperial cult was omnipresent there. They were employed most frequently in places directly impacted by the emperor, as in the case of Nero's journey to Greece.

Sculptures of the Neronian Period?

Apart from the representations mentioned so far which show Nero himself, only very few sculptures can be dated securely to the Neronian period: there are precious fragments of a triumphal arch (La Rocca (1992)) and sculptures from villae that were inhabited or built by Nero. We cannot always be sure, however, whether these belonged to the original or earlier or later decoration of these buildings. It is therefore difficult to speak of a "Neronian taste" in sculpture and much of this possible taste will have taken shape

Figure 20.17 Altar of Eumolpus. Florence Museo Archeologico. Cast Rome, Museo della Civiltà Romana. *Source*: ©2012 Marianne Bergmann.

during Claudius' reign, as the decoration of the now-sunken *nymphaeum* of Misenum demonstrates (Andreae 1983; see Beste and von Hesberg in this volume).

Programmatic, on the other hand, was Nero's confiscation of a new series of sculptures from Greece and Asia Minor, which he used for furnishing the Domus Aurea (Tacitus, *Annals* 15.45, 16.23; Dio of Prusa, *Rhodian Oration* 31, 148). Apparently, it was important not simply to furnish the villa with especially beautiful Greek statues – plenty of these were already available in Rome – but rather to procure them directly from Greece with the aura of their provenience still fresh. These very statues were later made

available to the wider public by Vespasian, who placed them in the Forum Pacis (Pliny, *Natural History* 34.84; see Beste and von Hesberg in this volume).

Interpreting Nero: Past and Present Scholarship

The Domus Aurea, along with Nero's other buildings and building projects within the city and the whole empire, as well as his portraiture (as discussed above) collectively manifest key aspects of Nero's government policies, his self-fashioning and the ways in which emperors were dealt with and spoken about. From them we can draw broader conclusions about Nero's conceptualization of himself as an emperor. To start with, I shall review the main earlier scholarly approaches to this material (see also the Further Reading section).

Nero's self-fashioning, politics, and activities showcase diverse and conflicting aspects of his personality: he is matricidal, a persecutor of Christians, and a megalomaniac, who seems to have carried monarchical representation to an extreme and who – according to some – had himself revered in oriental ceremonies but who at the same time adhered to the Augustan model to his end. He was a singing virtuoso who feared the jury's verdict at singing contests. He styled himself a philhellene but robbed Greece of its last statues, whilst granting "liberty" to that very country. A man of culture who supported a group of poets, an escapist who in the end dreamt of moving to Alexandria, a wastrel who ruined the state's finances – the list goes on.

Above all, Nero's alleged homicides, his megalomania, and his public artistic performances – inappropriate for a Roman noble – let the ancient world, as well as many scholars, assume that Nero was insane and suffered from ruler madness (*Caesarenwahn*), apparently just as Caligula before and Commodus after him. This, however, is not an adequate explanatory model. A. Winterling (2003) has demonstrated in his study of Caligula that the conflicting roles the *principes* had to play within the Principate could be the source of many problems. On the one hand, the ruler was indeed a monarch charged with overseeing a gigantic empire but, on the other hand, he was expected to behave as the "first among equals" toward senators and nobles in Rome and elsewhere (cf. Winterling, forthcoming). Significantly, it was mostly young rulers who could not cope with these conflicting roles. This made the question of imperial demeanor and interpersonal and interclass relations a permanent experiment – one which allowed for the occasionally excessive behavior of the ruler, but also smoothed over conflicts and thus might well explain the longevity of a system that lasted more than 300 years.

By contrast, scholars who did and do not believe in Nero's madness have searched for interpretations of Nero's behavior and actions which demonstrate that they were part of a unifying concept (cf. Elsner and Masters (1994)). Many solutions have been proposed and still others continue to be put forward. The reason for this diversity of theories is the great number of aspects under consideration, which have to be weighed against one another: single aspects that some scholars regard as primary explanations may be neglected by others and *vice versa*. This is also not to overlook the biased character of the ancient sources themselves. If the solution to be proposed here is

correct, the problem of reconciling Nero's actions is constituted by the framework itself, which allows for a multitude of connotations to be bound together by the concept of *otium*.

Among the many interpretations there are two main strands of scholarship. First, a school of thought, which can be traced back to L'Orange ((1942a) 68 ff., (1942b), (1947) 62 f., (1953) 28 ff., (1973) 292–312) and Schumann (1930), that attributes to Nero the concept of a monarchical government based on the idea of divine kingship with a sun-like ruler, following oriental and Egyptian or Ptolemaic models (see also Grimal (1969) 345 f., (1971) 215 ff.; Cizek (1982); Voisin (1987); Hemsoll (1990); and on Nero's late years, see Gagé (1955) 665 ff., (1968) 111 ff.). This approach ignores Nero's steadfast adherence to Augustus' model (cf. however Gagé (1955) 650 ff. on Nero's contradictive dealing with Apollo and his symbolism). Central to this kind of characterization is the interpretation of the Domus Aurea as an Oriental-Hellenistic palace with the cosmic connotations of its described main dining room (see above) and of the known octagonal room and its cupola identified with it. In addition, Schumann's (1930) research on Nero's personal entourage, which was rather oriental in character, and Seneca's conceptualization of government, with its complex comparison of Nero to Apollo and Sol (also in *De Clementia* written in AD 55), are both considered significant sources of evidence. The introduction of Greek cultural institutions such as Nero's games, baths, his gymnasium and performances, as well as his megalomaniac building projects, all also fall into this line of argument (see Beste and von Hesberg in this volume). L'Orange even suggested that Nero's coiffure looked back to Hellenistic models. In this school of thought, Nero's passion for singing and chariot-racing is understood either as an orientation toward Greek cultural values or as an important element of the new set of values and models he propagated. Connected to this oriental/Egyptian/monarchic Nero is a vein of scholarship that traces a family tradition of interest in Ptolemaic kingship from Marc Anthony via Caligula to Nero.

The research of Boethius ((1946), (1951), (1960)) and Toynbee (1947), however, did not subscribe to these views. Boethius points out that the Domus Aurea was nothing but a monumental Roman villa and that it provides no support for the notion that Nero wanted to style himself as an oriental, god-like king. In Toynbee's (1947) opinion, Nero's passion for singing and chariot-racing, as well as his megalomania, were the primary motivations behind his actions. As Suetonius notes, "he was acclaimed as the equal of Apollo in music and of the sun-god in driving a chariot" (*Nero* 53). This passion for singing and chariot-racing was at the root of his comparison to Apollo/Sol, his interest in Greek cultural institutions and Greek games that lead to his journey to Greece in order to take part in the competitions there (see Mratschek in this volume) and the subsequent declaration of Achaia's liberty. It also was at the roots of his dreams about Alexandria. For Toynbee, it was only Nero's megalomania and desire for luxury that motivated the construction of the Domus Aurea – which she, along with Boethius, interpreted primarily as an oversized Roman villa in the city – as well as other gigantic building projects. Accordingly, Toynbee explained Nero's coiffure as modeled on that of stage artists and

charioteers, a thesis that has since been refuted (see above). Her line of interpretation has been developed further in English-speaking studies by Charlesworth (1956), Ward-Perkins (1956), Bradley (1978) 175 ff., and, to some extent, by Griffin (1984) 215 ff. and Fears (1976).

Interpretations that see Nero as the founder of a new, almost mythical, world order of Dionysian frenzy or aesthetic revolutions or the like, form their own category (Charles-Picard (1962) 210 ff., Perrin (1987), and to some extent also Cizek (1982)).

Other interpretations, however, focus on Nero's "genuine" political ambitions or, by implication, their lack thereof. For example, Manning (1975) sees an attempt to win over the *plebs* (people) beside the idiosyncrasies of Nero's reign. Suggestions have also been put forward for reading Nero's journey to Greece as the appropriation of a now-Romanized Greece (Alcock (1994)), or to interpret Nero's obsession with singing and chariot-racing as a new version of the Roman merit system (Rilinger (1996)) or, conversely, as a complete rejection of all political ambition (Meier (2008)). Closer to my own interpretation, which I shall outline below, are Cizek's and Griffin's models, which both recognize Nero's (vain) attempt to change the value system of the Roman aristocracy as one of his main ambitions (although Cizek sees it replaced, albeit rather unconnected historically, by a new ideal of a world full of pleasure and games) (Griffin (1984), (2007); Cizek (1982)).

Interpreting Nero in Context

As the overview above has shown, the theories that Nero was guided by well-defined concepts of rulership or world-visions or, on the contrary, did nothing but follow personal whims lead to serious contradictions and require the exclusion of considerable amounts of historical data. Therefore it is necessary to find a working model that allows one to connect Nero's contradictory actions and behaviors. This model is to be found in the concept of *otium* (leisure/ease), a special kind of cultivated life which, owing to the way it originated, combined aspects of Greek culture with Hellenistic luxury – *luxuria* in a positive as well as a negative sense – and was initially restricted to the private sphere, only gradually it gained recognition as legitimate and even as contributing fruitfully to public life (André (1966); La Rocca (1986); on what follows, cf. Bergmann (1993) 27–30).

The cultural concept of *otium* was developed during the period of the conquest of south Italy and the east by the Romans in the third/second century BC. These conquests supplied Rome with enormous wealth, but also forced Romans to confront Greek culture and the luxuries of Hellenistic buildings and lifestyle. While these were seen as attractive, they were also regarded as dangerous to the Roman value system, which was normally centered around political activity. As a moral response, those phenomena were labeled negatively as *luxuria* and were only deemed acceptable as leisure activities (*otium*), preferably to be pursued outside Rome. Rustic farms were now transformed into the famous type of luxury villas, which – apart from luxurious

residential buildings – also contained elements of the main Greek or even royal cultural institutions, such as sports facilities, libraries, and art collections. In these villae, people composed poetry and prose, philosophized, collected works of art, and also indulged in life's comforts to an extent hitherto unknown. This led to the curious situation whereby critical traditionalists, such as the stern Cato the Elder (234–149 BC), lumped poetry and banquets together equally under the ill-tinged label of *luxuria*. With time, however, moral resentment against the values connected with *otium* declined. Bit by bit, and in adapted forms, the values and practices related to *otium* became socially accepted, became legitimate activities and were even adopted for the public representation of the emperor. The pinnacle of this development was reached in the early second century AD, when personalities such as Pliny the Younger – besides engaging in their political activities – spent every spare minute writing and somewhat later, with Hadrian's support, high society looked to Greek culture. The background to this cultural shift is complex. In contrast to the ideal of traditional Roman simplicity, stylized as the *mos maiorum* (the customs of the ancestors), these adopted lifestyles were attractive and modern and in the Greek world many of them, such as philosophy, were central to public life. In addition, with the establishment of the Principate, political ambition – formerly the driving force of Roman society – became less desirable and new alternatives acceptable. The activities associated with *otium* provided a viable option (see Mratschek in this volume).

In Nero's time this process was not yet complete; all activities related to *otium* could thus still be categorized as part of the negatively perceived *luxuria*, at least if taken to extremes. An important source for Neronian attitudes towards *otium* is the broader context of the passage (cited above) from Seneca's *De Brevitate Vitae* ("On the Shortness of Life," 12.2–9), which he wrote in AD 49, when he had just returned from exile to serve as Nero's teacher. The central message of his work is that not life itself is too short, but that it becomes short if one focuses on the wrong things. This even applies to the *otium* that, when practiced excessively, can become stressful. As examples he then cites the following activities: lingering in the villa and spending days poring over collections of old bronzes; prowling around sports facilities and (a perpetual accusation) watching the beautiful (and above all naked) male youth; pursuing without moderation the finer points of animal breeding; spending hours with the barber discussing every last ringlet; composing, listening to, and learning songs and overdoing vocal exercises; and, last but not least, arranging banquets with a large array of slaves, and all this for the fame of one's *elegantia*. To us, this sounds like a description of Nero's passions, but it was written before Seneca became Nero's teacher, and thus it reflects the lifestyles of the sophisticated world to which Nero was born. Writing poetry, vocal trainings, as well as playing the cithara – things that Nero pursued passionately from early on in his life – were, according to this testimony, naturally part of this lifestyle. (see Fantham in this volume) Strictly speaking this passage does not testify how far these activities were acceptable when not part of *otium*, for Seneca's criticism is not of the activities themselves, but of their cultivation to excess. Therefore, the panegyric *Laus Pisonis* (a 261-line hexameter poem praising the young Calpurnius Piso, the later leader of the Pisonian conspiracy of AD 65, written by a young but unidentifiable poet (Lucan and Calpurnius Siculus are the main contenders) is an important, almost contemporaneous addendum to Seneca's statements.

Besides his rhetorical abilities, Piso is praised for his athletic skills and his cithara-playing, which is so accomplished it is said that he must have learnt it from Apollo himself. These skills apparently belonged to the established educational canon of a young aristocrat in Neronian times. Moreover, cultivated *luxuria* – in the positive sense – had long been established as appropriate for the representation of leading personalities (Vitruvius, *De Architectura* 6.5).

It is precisely this concept of a cultivated, modern, internationally oriented, and at times self-indulgent lifestyle, which transferred activities and values formerly restricted to *otium* to the public life of Rome and the whole empire, that connects all of Nero's actions. Seen from this angle, it makes sense that he chose a mega-villa as his residence. It also explains Nero's construction of theatre and sports facilities in Rome, the introduction of games based on Greek models that were Roman in name only, his donation of oil for the gymnasiums of the upper classes whose participation he was soliciting, as well as his public banquets, his circle of poets, his own practice of the performing arts, and finally Nero's bestowal of freedom upon Greece. The latter act acknowledges the Greek origin of the concept of *otium* but does not excuse that Nero's speech at this event was embarrassingly egocentric (Bergmann (2002)). Nero's appearances as a singer and charioteer are thus linked to the Hellenized educational ideal as manifested by Seneca and the *Laus Pisonis.* The new, Roman parameters, however, put an emphasis on virtuosity, which became the defining feature for Nero's slightly unstable personality. On this basis, his journey to Greece, from which he returned as a *periodonikes* (winner in all four panhellenic games), was both necessary for his ego and the logical consequence of his conceptualization of *otium*.

The *otium* concept also allows for the emulation of Hellenistic splendor and of the audacity of Hellenistic technical projects: pompous demonstrations of power and rank in the ceremonies of Tiridates's investiture in the gilded theater of Pompey and the bestowal of freedom upon Greece (La Rocca (1986)) as well as Nero's huge technical projects.

The working model that Nero sought to establish a modern lifestyle and forms of representation that were linked to the concept of *otium*, has the advantage that – although Nero had to decide to promote this – neither he nor anyone else needed to create revolutionary forms of rule or world-visions. For members of the upper classes, many of Nero's concerns almost suggested themselves: Nero was part of a process that slowly gained general acceptance and his position allowed him to become a driving force behind it. That some items on his agenda were still ever so slightly objectionable under the conservative and negative definition of *luxuria* might even have made them particularly attractive because they were luxurious in a positive sense to Nero. It is this background that explains his luxurious coiffure. Nero's concern was not primarily with concepts of power, but with lifestyle in the widest sense. In this context his *bon mot* after the completion of the Domus Aurea – "at last [I am] housed like a human being" (Suetonius, *Nero* 31) – would then have a wider meaning.

The movement towards the acceptance of this lifestyle and its values was still under way when Nero attempted to promote them. However, the emperor's excesses hindered the general dissemination of these ideas and lead to their opposition. Under Hadrian, by contrast, the public acceptance of the values connected to *otium* prevailed at last.

Hadrian did almost everything that Nero had done: he lived in a huge villa at Tivoli, admired the East, was a philhellene, dabbled in the arts, wrote poetry, and his interests converged with the larger Hellenizing movement of the Second Sophistic. His coiffure and beard followed the fashion that Nero had made popular. But Hadrian got away with his even more aberrant behavior by avoiding the worst provocations. Nero was in a certain sense ahead of his times. And that proved – at least in part – to be his undoing.

FURTHER READING

The native English speaker will find the studies of Hiesinger (1975), Smith (1987, 2000) on portraiture and sculpture and Boethius (1951, 1960), Ward Perkins (1956), and Moormann (forthcoming monograph) on the Golden House helpful. On coinage in general, see Sutherland (1984) and Burnett et al. (1992); on specifically Neronian coinage, see MacDowall (1979) and Clay (1982).

On Nero's portraits, see also the well-illustrated study by Born and Stemmer (1996). The bronze portrait once in the Guttmann Collection, which forms the center of their study, shows the beard, which may be expected of a bronze portrait. Its ancient origin is, however, not beyond doubt.

On long- and short-term trends in imperial portraits, see the article: "Lang- und Kurzzeittrends" at the Göttingen e-learning facility on ancient portraiture: www.viamus.de (accessed 07/2010); http://viamus.uni-goettingen.de/fr/e/uni/d/05).

On the dating of Neronian *aes*, see MacDowall (1979) 31.42 who had dated the introduction of this coinage, which had always been dated to AD 64, back to AD 62 (see also Sutherland (1984) 138). Giard (1988) 30 held on to the dating to AD 64, a view that can be confirmed based on the emperor's coin portraits (Bergmann (1998) 172–3).

On *memoria damnata*, see Pekáry (1985) 134–42, Bergmann and Zanker (1981), and Varner (2004) 1–12, 46–85 with illustrations.

For the metaphorical character of the comparison between rulers and gods, see Kyrieleis (1986) 60; Maderna (1988) 32–52; Svenson (1995); Bergmann (1993, 1998 16–39 and passim); Smith (2000), particularly 541; Hallett (2005) 223–64; for theomorphic depictions of private citizens Wrede (1981); Zanker and Ewald 2004.

For documentation on the Colossus of Nero, see Bergmann (1994); despite the critique of Smith (2000) 536 concerning the sources, the connection of the Colossus to Nero himself seems to be the likeliest suggestion; see also Albertson (2001); Ensoli (2000) has shown that the bronze head of Constantine's colossus was found at the Colosseum. Her suggestions that this head is a remodeled head of Nero (Ensoli (2000, 2007)) is made unlikely not only through the size, but also through the fact that the back of this head does not match the typology of portraits of Nero (see M. Bergmann, P. Cain: Nero, Galba, Otho, Vitellius, in the series: "Das römische Herrscherbild," in preparation).

For details of the different interpretations of the reign of Nero mentioned in the section headed "Interpreting Nero: Past and Present Scholarship," see Bradley (1978); Griffin (1984); Moormann (1998); and Bergmann (1993, 1998).

For the use of the term "propaganda," see Weber and Zimmermann, eds., (2003).

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CHAPTER 21

Neronian Wall-Painting. A Matter of Perspective

Katharina Lorenz

> *This is why it is essential to ask of artistic periods and regions not only whether they have perspective, but also which perspective they have.*
>
> (Panofsky (1997) 41)

We face a range of challenges when we set out to explore Roman wall-painting within the confines of the reign of an individual emperor. Except for a few contexts firmed up by absolute dates, the chronology of wall-painting rests entirely on a network of stylistic relationships; a nebulous system of shifts, stagnation, and development. Attempts at synchronizing this system with the absolute dates of imperial activity can prove, at best, laborious; at worst, they lead to those irksome vicious circles of historical scholarship in which the evidence of one is taken to vouch for the other, without ever quite making the cut (an example of such an approach, focusing on Augustus, is provided by Galinsky (1996) 179–96).

The two systems appear to be irreconcilably at odds with each other in the way they organize the material. Still, two factors render engagement with Neronian wall-painting promising and necessary enough to seek a catalyst to reconcile the two systems. First, the Neronian period provides an exceptional corpus of externally datable material: Nero's flagship building project, the Domus Aurea, begun in AD 64, serves as document for the imperial use of wall-painting; and, outside Rome, the extensive redecorations across Pompeii after the earthquake of AD 62 give a rich display of its use in the domestic context. Second, the literary sources confirm Nero as an emperor with a refined interest in matters of art, and in mentioning the court painter Famulus they include explicit reference to wall-painting (Pliny, *Natural History* 35.37.120), a genre otherwise only rarely commented upon in literature.

Such abundance of evidence marks Neronian wall-painting particularly enticing and worthwhile for study, but it also constitutes a crucial heuristic problem: that is, how

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to handle the relationship between the genre and Nero's persona. Schefold identifies the Neronian period as the beginning of the "Fourth Style," assuming the flamboyant emperor as the driving force behind its "baroque," "theatrical," and generally "illusionistic" character (Schefold (1952) 171). This in some ways presents a positive re-evaluation of wall-painting from the second half of the first century AD, a period Mau had hardly discussed in the seminal study that instituted the Four Styles of wall-painting. He had perceived the Fourth Style as a marker of the decline of Pompeian painting (Mau (1882)). Yet Schefold's work also consolidated the character of the troubled emperor as the sole filter for interpreting artistic production.

Schefold's dating of the Fourth Style has since been variedly contested, first by Beyen, who argued for its beginning under Tiberius (Beyen (1965) 358–9). Following an argument introduced by Wirth (Wirth (1927) 81), Strocka has most recently and convincingly asserted the Claudian period as starting date, on the basis of his study of the Casa del Principe di Napoli in Pompeii (Strocka (1984)) and his identification of the *nymphaeum* with Fourth Style paintings on the Palatine not as a part of the Domus Transitoria but as a Claudian structure (Strocka (2007) 317).

If the emergence of the Fourth Style is disconnected from the reign of Nero, any interpretive claims about this type of painting solely based on this particular emperor's character cannot be upheld. And with the Fourth Style established as an artistic phenomenon lasting from the reign of Claudius into that of the Flavians, its characteristics are confirmedly resilient to the whims of daily politics, its qualities too complex to be explained by the predilections of an individual emperor. A necessary precondition for the study of Neronian wall-painting, then, is the disengagement of the figure of the emperor from the artistic phenomena prevalent in the period demarcated by the dates of Nero's reign, notwithstanding the obvious paradox this entails.

With Nero vacating the stage for the moment, the alleged void offers space for an alternative analytical framework to tackle the dichotomy between "the study of wall-painting," with its relative relationships, and "imperial history," resting on absolute dates. That new analytical framework is "perspective." The category of perspective is flexible enough to account for and make sense of the development of artistic phenomena over time, and it avoids the solitary exclusivity of a purely genre-immanent point of view that could otherwise lead to ahistorical redundancy. In short, perspective serves as a meta-principle, a bridging device to synchronize the two differing organizational systems at the heart of this study.

What I have in mind here is not perspective as a technique to represent an object in space (Gombrich (1960) 250, 257), but as a carrier of metaphorical meaning, a culturally relative organizational principle in the sense of Erwin Panofsky's assessment quoted above. It is not enough to ask whether Neronian wall-painting has perspective: we must also ask what perspective Neronian wall-painting has. In practice, I will use "perspective" here as a principle to organize objects in space, and use it as a category to explore the relationship between wall-painting, the spaces it represents, the spaces within which it is displayed, its viewers, and the types of spectatorship facilitated in the mix. In the following, I will employ perspective specifically to consider the way in which spatiality, narrative, and perception are negotiated in Neronian wall-painting, starting with the domestic contexts of Campania and then using them as a filter to explore the evidence of the Domus Aurea.

Nature and Space: Beyond *Trompe-L'Oeil*

The most prominent context of Neronian wall-painting in the region of Campania is Villa A at Oplontis. This extensive villa, built around 40 BC, has in scholarship frequently been linked to Poppaea Sabina (AD 30/32–65), Nero's second wife (De Franciscis (1979)). Whilst evidence for a connection with the imperial court is not entirely conclusive, the complex certainly served as a dwelling for a member of the Roman elite. Current excavations have given us a much enhanced understanding of the chronology of the villa's stunning wall decorations. Between AD 45 and 79, three renovation campaigns took place (Thomas and Clarke (2009) 363–4). The eastern section of the site, around the *natatio*, the large pool in the garden, must have been put into place before AD 62, thus providing evidence to date the decoration of the rooms around this part of the house to the earlier part of Nero's reign (Pappalardo (2009) 68).

This area of the villa displays a penchant for exploring nature and architecture alongside each other: Room (69), a large reception area, placed centrally in the east wing, looks onto the *natatio*, whilst to the north and south it is framed by two rooms that appear as *viridaria* (pleasure gardens), but essentially are both light wells adorned with garden paintings (Rooms (68) and (70)). Through window-openings in the walls a long viewing axis is created (see Figure 21.1), linking a substantial part of this wing of the villa to the north leading through Rooms (74) and (87), ending, with a noticeable change of axis towards the west, in Room (89); and to the south to Room (61) via (65). The size of the windows decreases from the inside to the outside, in this way generating what one

Figure 21.1 Oplontis (Torre Annunziata), Villa A: viridarium (87).

could call spatial suspense, raising expectations as to what it is that is hidden from view in this way.

Throughout this suite of rooms, architecture is employed as a framing device of nature. The viewer is supplied with a mixture of actual nature, with views of the *natatio* and garden vegetation, and its virtual counterpart, with wall-painting displaying lush garden scenes (Bergmann (2002)). The latter is by no means inferior to the former: where outside a row of statues and one of plane trees form a lavish tapestry, one yet again fuelled by the combination of artificial and natural embellishment, the walls inside are covered in a deep golden yellow, their glow enhanced by the luscious red tone of the dado and the partings of the main zone. They form the backdrop for ample garden vegetation, with fountains in the centre of many panels, and with birds, and even peacocks completing the scenery, flying about, drinking, or picking fruit.

This decoration clearly shares in spirit what characterizes earlier depictions of the Roman infatuation with *ars topiaria*, the art of gardening, e.g. the sumptuous garden paintings in the subterranean salon in the Villa of Livia ad Gallinas Albas at Primaporta, dating to the transition from Second to Third Style; or its Pompeian counterparts, decorated in the Third Style in the early first century AD, the *viridarium* in the Casa di Sallustio (Regio VI 2, 4), the corridors in the Casa di P. Cornelius Teges (Regio I 7, 10–12), Room (8) and (12) of the Casa del Frutteto (Regio I 9, 5) and the well-preserved frescos in the Oecus, a large room for entertainment, in the Casa di Bracciale d'Oro (Regio VI 17, 42), painted in the second quarter of the first century AD.

But whilst all these paintings are similar in their ability to render fictive garden spaces, what differentiates the décor of Villa A is that the discourse around nature and artificiality is played out not exclusively in the genre of wall-painting, as it is in those earlier examples, but in the interface of the virtual depictions of the outside and the actual garden. The segregation of horticultural and architectural environment is dissolved and replaced with a more pervasive notion of space that encompasses reality and virtuality. An intermingling of different levels of reality that is not confined to lavish upper-class dwellings as is Villa A but can also be found in small to mid-size Pompeian houses from the same chronological stratum, e.g. in the Casa della Venere in Conchiglia (Regio II 2, 2), redecorated after the earthquake of AD 62. Here, the entire back wall of the pseudo-peristyle garden is covered with a garden painting, providing views into a garden landscape and, in the centre, a vista with a marine setting, depicting a nude Venus lounging in a shell.

It is however another breed of heterogeneous space that emerges as the most popular during the Neronian period in the Pompeian domestic context. Here, space and nature are not just negotiated with each other – the virtual can replace the natural element in its entirety. The Casa dell'Ara Massima (Regio VI 16, 15.17), a small Pompeian dwelling entirely decorated in the Fourth Style, gives in its *atrium* (B), the central node of the house, a good example of the attempt to relocate the outdoors inside (Stemmer (1992)). Facing the entrance, the *atrium*'s extensive west wall combines across its 35m^2 a rich assortment of visual stimuli (see Plate 3). Careful analysis of the different layers of plaster has shown that the whole wall was decorated in one phase during the Neronian period, thus confounding the later, Vespasian date proposed by Curtius and Schefold (Stemmer (1992) 42, 46).

The wall is divided into a low dado in yellow, a normal central zone in red and an upper zone, yellow in the centre and red to the sides, that is taller than the lower two

together. The lower register of the wall is broken up by three openings: the door to Room (C), the pseudo-*tablinum* (D), and another niche-like space, Room (E). In the upper register, the tripartite scheme is continued by means of painting: while to each side an *aedicula* (an architectural niche) houses a staircase, the lower part of the tall central panel serves as a window onto a sacral landscape with a temple structure in its centre, a *schola*, held by a painted Caryatid, and further sacral architecture in the background.

This central panel is surrounded by a series of devices set to enhance its spatial appearance: a broad frame in brown, white, and yellow surrounds it and sets it off from the upper part of the opening, with a blue curtain hanging from above, billowing on top and behind this frame, thus vouching for the opening's alleged physical existence as a window. At the bottom of the opening, a stucco cornice, of which little remains today, protrudes from the wall, further enhancing the notion of spatial depth into which the opening would take the view. The flanking painted *aediculae* enhance the depth further, serving as a funnel, whose primarily visual functions are underlined by the *imagines clipeatae*, framed portraits, hanging from their sides.

The portrait protomes of these shields are not the only heads turned towards the central part of the wall: the female figures positioned in each *aedicula* also look towards the central panel; and so do the theater masks positioned inside the *aediculae* and the tall figures of the two gods, Neptune on the left and Victoria on the right, who stand on pedestals on the respective outer edges of each *aedicula*. This depiction of visual properties by means of viewers is a crucial tool for generating virtual spatiality; adding to this are two further attempts at introducing multiple perspectives into the physical space over which the west wall resides. First, there is notable discrepancy in the alignment of the built architecture of the west wall and the decoration of its upper register – the former is aligned centrally to the room, whereas the latter is shifted to the north. Secondly, the decoration of the lower register of the north wall is oriented slightly to the south, with the central niche of the lower register, the pseudo-*tablinum* (D), offset to the left in comparison with the central panel of the upper register.

Shifting the perspectival axis is a common feature in the built environment of Roman houses; by negating or displacing vanishing points individual spaces can be made to appear more extensive than they physically are. Condensed into the space of the *atrium*, and executed in two different modes, through architecture and decoration, a highly complex visual environment is created, characterized by attempts at virtual spatial extension, and at multi-perspectivity – a powerful means to support a variety of viewing situations and to enthrall viewers, not least by continuously frustrating their viewing experience.

A final visual counterpoint is on the west wall, served up by the decoration of the pseudo-*tablinum* (D): above a faux-marble pedestal and embedded in a white background that stands out clearly against the rest of the west wall, the alcove in its centre displays a mythological panel depicting Narcissus, surrounded by painted wooden shutters. In a cunning game of visual double-crossing, the shutters and the marble signal a venerable Greek pedigree, locating the niche in a world of precious wooden panels and Hellenistic cultural sophistication, while the panel itself heralds yet another type of visual trespass. The theme of Narcissus, here sitting in front of a large votive pillar, gazing into the space outside the picture frame, his reflection staring from the pond at his feet, embodies the lure, and the dangers, of spectatorship (Elsner (2007)

132–76, esp. 156–60); and in the Casa dell'Ara Massima this Narcissistic theme explicitly protrudes into space: in the niche in front of the panel, a travertine water basin was positioned, thus adding an actual reflection of the tragic youth to the painted one already on display.

The *atrium* of the Casa dell'Ara Massima creates the outside area the house would otherwise not possess. Such a use of space is markedly different from the arrangement in Villa A at Oplontis, where built environment and nature are conscientiously amalgamated; but comparable to that in the contemporary Casa dell'Orso (Regio VII 2, 44–6), a dwelling of a similar size in which the back of the *atrium* holds the doubled function of a garden (complete with a wall decoration of large painted openings and garden vistas, similar to the garden painting in the Casa della Venere in Conchiglia), and with the additional, colorful feature of a *nymphaeum* decorated with a pebble mosaic (Ehrhardt (1988)).

And yet the unique solution provided in the Casa dell'Ara Massima is not modeled on a passage into a garden, but on windows for views into the distance, such as those in the large *triclinium* in the Casa di Fabius Rufus (Regio VII 16, 22): windows which (as the niche with Narcissus demonstrates) open onto fictitious nature and at the same time onto the realm of the mythological. The pervasive notion of space evident in the decoration of Villa A at Oplontis thus finds itself extended, no longer simply a way to resolve the dichotomy between nature and architecture, but the fusion of different planes to create multiple atmospheric layers in the Casa dell'Ara Massima.

This arrangement then can support a range of different situations of life, and serve as a shadowgraph to orchestrate domestic ritual. But it would be a mistake to see this solely as a mechanism to lend smaller houses the same *gravitas* as that of larger dwellings, in which the different atmospheric elements are distributed across individual spaces. Zanker has certainly shown convincingly the way in which Pompeian houses were designed in the imperial period, based on a construction kit inspired by much larger Roman country villas, and layering water features and landscape vistas with picture and sculpture galleries even in the most restricted space as in the Casa di Octavius Quartio (Zanker (1998) 145–56). But that the owners of modest dwellings could aspire to higher things in this way is, while undoubtedly a symptom of the Roman imperial social fabric, to no lesser degree the result of a very specific notion of the modalities of space and, specifically, of understanding space as a framework. As we will see this framework then can be cast as a descriptor, if not a narrative agent in its own right.

Space and Narrative: The Theater as Perspectival Tool

The atmospheric multi-layering in the Casa dell'Ara Massima is to a considerable degree achieved by decorative elements borrowed from stage sets, the *scaenae frontes* of theater architecture. In combination with elements of nature and mythology, this creates the particular non-homogeneous space central to generating multiple atmospheric layers. When facing this specific type of *scenographia* it falls to the viewer to perform the vital act of homogenization, of exploring this new form of pervasive virtual reality down to the individual elements constituting it. Elements of the theater stage appear

especially appropriate to stimulate such behavior, given that such homogenization of perspective is precisely what is required from theater audiences, who have to negotiate plot, performance, costumes, and the setting.

The use of *scaenae frons* decoration is not an innovation of Neronian wall-painting. Vitruvius identifies it as an element of representational domestic decoration as early as the last quarter of the first century BC (*De Architectura* 7.5.2), and indeed Second Style wall-painting frequently features elements from theater architecture, for example in Villa A at Oplontis or in the Villa of P. Fannius Synistor in Boscoreale. After a short spell of relative insignificance during the Third Style, however, *scaenae frons* decorations return to the walls of the Fourth Style in a thoroughly remodeled guise. They now habitually fill whole walls and they incorporate elements of purely fantastic architectural reverie, such as masonry architraves resting on floral ranks.

Where the theater walls of the Second Style had extended space into the wall, opening vistas onto fictitious architectural landscapes by seemingly aligning them towards the back, for the walls of the Fourth Style it is more common to progress forward, into the actual space in front of the picture. This creates a specific, almost tangible form of pervasive virtuality. This is further enhanced by another feature that separates the *scaenae frontes* of the Fourth Style clearly from any earlier adaptations: the inclusion of figures in the theater architecture, either looking outwards onto the viewer or acting within the virtual space. These figures grant the virtual spaces a false physical reality; they serve as relayers to the outside viewers by highlighting their own act of viewing; and they also can be activated as narrative agents.

Cubiculum (a) in the Casa di Pinarius Cerialis (Regio III 4, 4–6) offers a striking example of this new use of *scaenae frons* decoration from the 50s AD. Here, adjacent to a depiction of Attis with the nymphs of Sangarios, a scene from the myth of "Iphigenia among the Taurians" is set within a particularly inspired *scaenae frons* architecture full of fantastic building elements, stacked upon each other without concern for static loads or the rules of logic: the priestess stands in the centre, in an elevated *aedicula*, accompanied by servants and holding the cult statue; on the right stand Orestes and Pylades, both with their hands tied behind their back; and on the left sits King Thoas, with a companion standing behind him (Figure 21.2).

This particular episode appears in nine further instances on Pompeian walls, more frequently on those of the Fourth than those of the Third Style (Lorenz (2008) 238–9), and all are set within self-contained mythological panels in grand central reception rooms. Iphigenia is always depicted in the central role, elevated on the steps of the temple; and in most, the triangle between Orestes and his companion, Thoas, and Iphigenia is explored; only once is Thoas not depicted. The scenes are set within a sacral-palatial setting and they generate an atmosphere of ceremonious piety, particularly with regard to Iphigenia, and of male *virtus* and *amicitia*, virtue and friendship, as embodied in the fact that both Orestes and Pylades stand in for each other, hindering Thoas from establishing which of the two is the real Orestes (Leach (2004) 118; Bielfeldt (2005) 241–51).

Spreading out the figures in a *scenographia* as offered on the *cubiculum* (small room) wall allows for two elements which differ from the presentation of standard central panels. First, it brings the figures closer to the sphere of the viewers. They are not enclosed within their own, demarcated picture field but distributed across the whole wall and, in

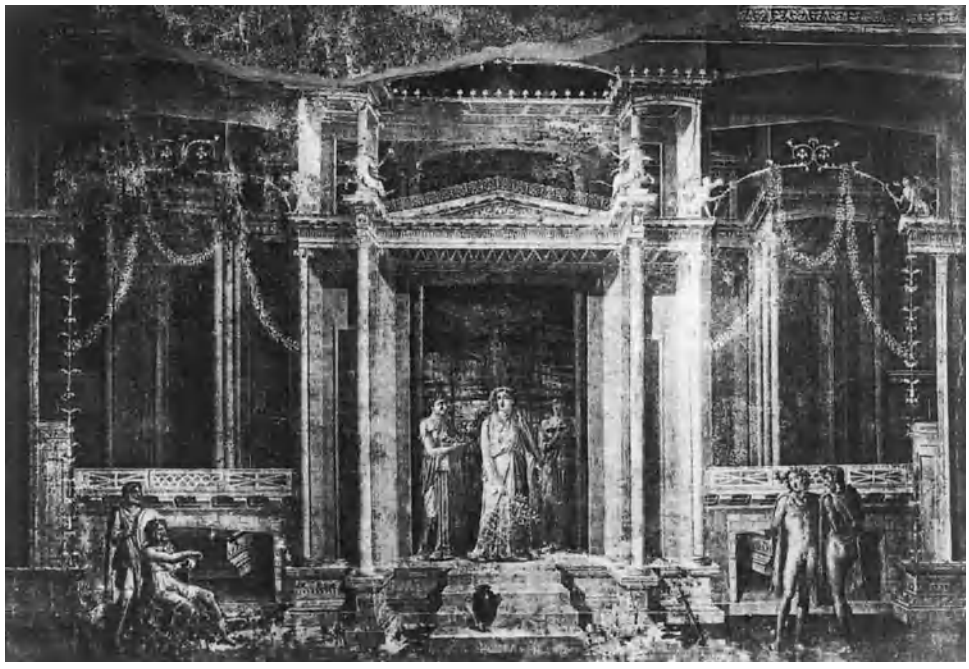


Figure 21.2 Pompeii, Casa di Pinarius Cerialis: cubiculum (a). *Source*: ©2012 Munich, Museum für Abgüsse Klassischer Bildwerke, Photothek.

this case, on a level with their audience. This is further enhanced by one of the youths looking out of the picture frontally. Second, the arrangement also renders the narrative on display more accessible to the viewers – not only are the individual characters closer to their own sphere, they are also positioned as if to facilitate engagement with their individual disposition rather than simply, and exclusively, with their role within the scene as a whole. In supporting this form of individual symbolization, the mythological figures fulfill the role of a relayer similar to that of the spectator figures in the Casa dell'Ara Massima.

Whilst older scholarship had seen the renewed appearance of *scaenae frons* walls in the Fourth Style as a direct and ideological reference to Nero's interest in the theater (Picard (1982)), Moormann and others have shown that the appearance of these walls can be explained by an increased interest in the theater, and with it in issues of spectatorship, on a much wider social scale (Moormann (1983); Leach (2004) 114–22). And indeed this is what the analysis of the decoration in the Casa dell'Ara Massima points towards, and what is supported by the contexts in the Casa di Pinarius Cerialis and another, comparable context, the Casa di Apolline (Regio VI 7, 23), where in the modestly sized Room (g) Apollo resides in a central *aedicula* within the *scaenae frons*, with Phaethon and Venus at his side.

Such a conclusion, however, fails to answer fully why myth is represented in this way and why in smaller rooms in particular. The interest in spectatorship seems to be only a symptom of a more profound issue here, the modalities of space and their potential as carrier of meaning: a concept gaining increased interest during the Neronian period.

In these small rooms, the theater walls open up an imaginary landscape into which the viewers can dip at their leisure. Meanwhile the architectural space remains unchanged, both with regard to its actual physical boundaries and the claims made on its painted surface. The walls in *cubiculum* (a) in the Casa di Pinarius Cerealis do not extend outwards, as a painted garden scene would. But on an conceptual level, a range of possible connections is offered to extend the viewers' faculties of imagination: a process comparable to the functioning of the Narcissus panel in the Casa dell'Ara Massima.

Narrative and Perception: The Theming of Space

The scenes in the Casa di Pinarius Cerealis emphasize the doubled role that figures taken from myth can assume in Neronian wall-painting, both as representing a narrative, and thus part of a strictly fictitious realm, and as a relayer for the viewers, to enter into a discourse anchored in reality. Where the decorations of Villa A at Oplontis were tuned to resolve the dichotomy between nature and architecture, the case of the Casa dell'Ara Massima demonstrates that decorations including mythological panels address the dichotomy between fiction and reality on another, intersecting level: and, stitched into both, they thus facilitate a multi-modal transmission of content.

This dual potential of mythological panels is explored extensively during the Fourth Style, when this type of decoration gains dominance on the walls of Pompeian houses, with considerable ramifications both for the zoning of different parts of the domestic context and for the forms of interaction the narratives on display offer. Petronius provides examples for both aspects in his *Satyrica*, his rich panorama of life around the cities of Campania during the Neronian age: the freedman Trimalchio, whose affluence is only matched by his painfully exuberant behavior, has his house lavishly decorated: and these decorations, which include depictions of *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in his *atrium*, indicate the existence of a notion of appropriate mythological decoration for certain parts of the house (*Satyrica* 29: see Murgatroyd in this volume). In another episode, a visit to a picture gallery brings Encolpius face to face with three mythological paintings, which he uses to reflect upon his love-life, presently marred by his failure to woo his favorite toy-boy (*Satyrica* 83.1–6; Elsner (2007) 177–99): the episode thereby vouches for a way of viewing mythological panels in which the way individual viewers create meaning for themselves is of far greater relevance than the actual story depicted.

The use of mythological images within the domestic context undergoes a series of shifts and changes throughout the first century AD, from a pronounced focus on the mythological narrative "proper" to individualized depictions which encourage an intense interaction with the image itself and thereby foster forms of individual engagement beyond the simple recognition of collective cultural elements. Similarly, we find a shift in the zoning of the house by means of mythological panels: while during the Third Style mythological decorations are mostly confined to grand and representative reception spaces, they pervade the whole house in Fourth Style decorations. Here they appear in more diversified conglomerations, clearly coding individual spaces; towards male status representation in the *cenationes* (the grand reception rooms), or towards more emotionalized, heterogeneous, and discursive visual content in smaller rooms or garden areas.

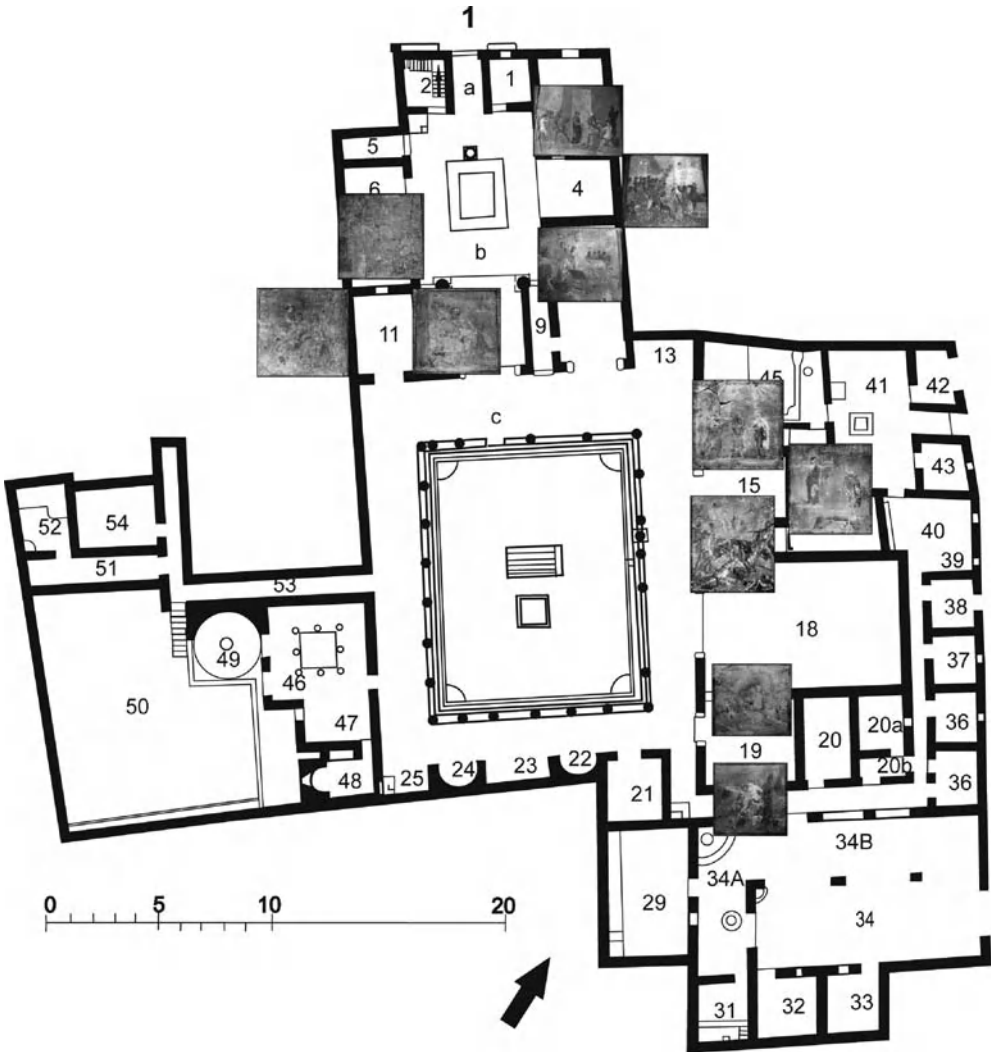
The Neronian period appears as the formative phase for this process of diversification: the exploration of the space between image and viewer, between the real and the imaginary, gradually gains more and more importance in the way mythological decoration is distributed across the house. But whilst noticeable effort is made at intermingling fictitious stories with affirmative ideals relevant for the life outside the picture, what remains most characteristic for the Pompeian decorations until the city's destruction is an unease, almost reluctance, to resolve this dichotomy fully: a marked contrast to the later use of myth on sarcophagi and mosaics.

The Casa del Menandro (Regio I 10, 4), one of Pompeii's most prominent and well-published houses (Ling and Ling (2005)), provides unique evidence for this transitional process. The house is decorated throughout with high-quality wall-painting, and the chronology of the individual decorative phases is well established. Ling has argued convincingly that between the 40s and 60s AD a comprehensive redecoration of the walls takes place in three stages: the first early in the Fourth Style in the 40s; the other two during the mature Fourth Style, with the second before and the third after the earthquake of AD 62 (Ling and Ling (2005) 4). It seems that the same workshop continued its work over this extended period, from before until after the earthquake; whence Ling establishes a date between AD 61 and 65 for the second and third phase of redecoration.

Mythological decoration occurs in two areas (Map 3): around the *atrium*, in *ala* (4), decorated after the earthquake, three scenes from the *Iliupersis* ("Fall of Troy") are juxtaposed: around the peristyle, three rooms, decorated at different points during the Fourth Style, display episodes of the myth of Perseus and his rescue of the Ethiopian princess Andromeda (Map 3). While the choice of epic stories for the decoration of the *atrium* area adheres to a pattern common for the Fourth Style, the element of consecutive narrative that connects the decorations in the peristyle area is more unusual, and indeed it constitutes an exploration of different decorative options at the interface of myth and (an idealized) reality.

Two stages of the Perseus myth are on display: before the rescue of Andromeda, Perseus negotiates with her parents; and after the successful killing of the sea-monster Cetus, to which Andromeda, chained to a rock, had been offered as sacrifice, the hero celebrates his achievement with his newly won bride. In Room (11), from the first stage of decorations, Perseus and Andromeda are on the west wall depicted in the so-called *Happy End Type*: both characters sit next to each other after Perseus has killed the monster and freed Andromeda; the hero tightly embraces Andromeda, and they both gaze upon the reflection of the Gorgon's head in a pool in front of them, its deadly powers thus defused. This is combined on the north wall with a panel depicting a Maenad, feeding grapes to a Cupid or Baby Dionysus; and on the east wall a Satyr is shown pouring liquid from a mask onto a child or Cupid.

Room (15), from the second stage of redecorations, shows on the north wall Perseus in the palace of Andromeda's parents, Cepheus and Cassiopeia; on the east wall, a version of the *Liberation Type* is on display: having killed the sea-monster, Perseus is about to free Andromeda from the rock. A depiction of the punishment of Dirce being tied to the horns of a bull on the south wall completes the room's decoration. In Room (19), decorated in the last stage of redecorations, the central panels are preserved on north and south wall only, and they merely allude to the depictions of Perseus and Andromeda



Map 3 Pompeii, Casa del Menandro: plan with location of mythological frescos. *Source*: Plan by Katharina Lorenz.

in both form and motif: in the panel on the north wall, a seated female holds a large theatrical mask, using it to threaten a Cupid, who is turning away in surprise and alarm. In the panel on the south wall, a seated Satyr is shown playing the syrinx, with a Maenad standing next to him.

The three rooms evolve around a cunning game of inter-visuality across the peristyle: and they do so within two frameworks, the first working on the level of mythological narrative, the second through the constitution of more general desires and ideals. With regard to the level of myth, Room (11) provides the "closure" scene for the marriage agreement and the act of liberation depicted in Room (15), thus weaving a strong consecutive narrative. On the second level, the constitutive narrative elements of the

depiction of Perseus and Andromeda in Room (11) are broken down and diluted to form part of a diffuse Dionysian realm, centered around the petrifying powers of a mask-like object.

If Ling's micro-chronology for the decoration of the peristyle area is correct, the way in which what is depicted in Room (11) comes to be played out in Room (15) and Room (19) can be taken as evidence for the process of experimentation in the Neronian period and the appropriation of myth in the domestic context. While both categories – those of consecutive narrative, and of generalizing desires and ideals – are not novel on Pompeian walls, their combined and yet separate appearance is unusual. The patterns of mythological decoration in houses decorated in the late Fourth Style, for example in the Casa di Meleagro (Regio VI 9, 2.13) or the Casa della Caccia Antica (Regio VII 4, 48; Allison and Sear (2002)), demonstrate that the second type, the intermingling of fiction and ideals relevant to daily life, will ultimately keep the upper hand in domestic decoration.

The Domus Aurea: The Art of Pervasive Confinement

An investigation of the Domus Aurea, Nero's palace in the heart of metropolitan Rome, collapses the distinction introduced at the beginning, that between Nero, the person, and the art of his period. What may look like an inconsistent analytical maneuver on my part is inevitable for two reasons: first, among the existing evidence the Domus Aurea offers the best-dated example of Roman wall-painting; and second, it constitutes the context most extensively perused (and abused) both in ancient and modern sources to support claims about the emperor, his political program and ideology, his madness (or ingenuity), and, by identifying it as the central pivot-point for Roman artistic signage of the period, the nature and meaning of Neronian art at large. An understanding of Neronian wall-painting and the scholarly discourses that surround it would therefore not be complete without a visit to the emperor's den (see also Beste and von Hesburg in this volume).

The Domus Aurea was erected after the Great Fire in Rome of AD 64, roughly in the same period characterized in Pompeii by widespread redecoration work after the earthquake. Decoration of the part of the palace located on the Oppius, the so-called Esquiline Wing, can be divided into three phases, two during Nero's lifetime, the last after his death, when the palace had been taken over by Otho. It is generally agreed that wall-painting only made for a secondary aspect of the palace's decoration, otherwise dominated by lavish *opus sectile* flooring (marble inlay flooring), marble wall cladding, and rich furnishing with artworks of all kinds. It is also noteworthy that the painterly decoration of the palace is attributed at least in part to Famulus (aka *Fabullus*, Meyboom (1995) 233–4), a painter celebrated by Pliny for his craftsmanship (*Natural History* 35.37.120), with continuing disputes in scholarship about which parts were decorated by the man himself, his workshops, or other workshops, working under his aegis or on their own account (Dacos (1968); Meyboom (1995); Meyboom and Moormann (2002)).

The Domus Aurea, with its vast landscaped gardens and numerous buildings, shares the characteristic of amalgamating artificial and real space with Villa A at Oplontis;

it also displays the same penchant for the kinds of heterogeneous, virtual spaces by means of wall-decoration that can be encountered in contexts such as the Casa dell'Ara Massima or the Casa di Pinarius Cerealis: numerous walls in the Esquiline Wing are dressed in painted architectures, with the occasional landscape vista, interspersed with still lives or theater masks (Meyboom and Moormann (2002) 47–9), particularly along the passageways, for example in Corridor (79). In addition in Cryptoporticus (92) the ceiling is also decorated with so-called wall-paper patterns, another typical feature of Fourth Style decorations.

Moreover some *scenographia* paintings here feature individual characters, even without connection to myth. Similar to (55) and (131), Corridor (50) presents above a high marble socle cladding a multi-compartmentalized *scaenae frons*, with two registers and a central *aedicula*. Each of the six compartments in the lower register has a figure sitting or standing inside, and another one appears in the central *aedicula*. This arrangement has a twofold effect: on the one hand, with the wall designed in clear central perspective, the viewers have to orientate themselves towards the wall – not an inconsiderable feat, given that this room is a long and fairly narrow passageway, which makes it difficult for the viewers to take in the overall composition (Leach (2004) 115). The figures amidst the scenery, however, generate a very different form of reception: in their various space-consuming poses, they can almost enclose and thus follow the viewers. This suspends the centralizing powers of the architectural decoration and creates an effect of pervasive presence, similar to what Pliny describes as one of Famulus' trademarks: "By his hand was a painting of Minerva, who seemed to look at the beholder wherever he stood" ("Huius erat Minerva spectantem spectans quamque aspiceretur"; *Natural History* 35.37.120; trans. Meyboom (1995) 233).

This combination of multiple perspectives, of architectural decoration demanding alignment and figural decoration to afford more audience-led, discursive forms of interaction, appears similar to the strategies encountered in the Pompeian Casa dell'Ara Massima and the Casa del Menandro. It is perhaps not entirely convincing to assume that the effect of this combination will render its audiences immobile, as the over-indulgent attempts of Petronius' Trimalchio do (Leach (2004) 115) – on the contrary, decorations such as this seem to be ideally suited to facilitate their audiences' mobility, both in terms of the physical acts and the conceptual perspectives they can open up.

With these corridors just as restricted in size as the Pompeian spaces that displayed *scaenae frons* decorations, one could easily assume that such strategies of multi-perspective composition were confined to smaller spaces. And yet the most striking ornamental features of the Domus Aurea, its vault decorations, confound such expectations. Ceiling decorations – executed in a combination of stucco and paint – become increasingly popular during the Fourth Style, especially in the context of the Baths (Ling (1991) 91–3). The most notable feature of the vault decorations in the Domus Aurea is the amount of figure scenes, and, more specifically, mythological scenes they display. It is as if here mythological figure decoration, in Pompeii mostly confined to the central zones of the walls, has migrated upwards.

Room (119) shall serve as representative example for ceiling decorations across the palace (Figure 21.3). Two features render it suitable: it is one of the larger reception spaces in the immediate vicinity of the largest room of this type in the extant complex, the Octagonal Hall (128), and one of various rooms here furnished with mythological

Figure 21.3 Rome, Domus Aurea: Room (119), ceiling. *Source*: ICCD, Fondo/Collezione GFN E 54520.

ceiling paintings; and secondly, it presents a scene from the Trojan cycle, the corpus to which most mythological scenes in the Domus Aurea adhere. While the walls of the room are decorated with elaborate *scaenae frons* scenes, complete with spectators inside the architecture and with stucco embellishments to enhance spatiality, the ceiling is organized into a range of rectangular compartments. In the centre is a panel depicting Achilles on Scyros, seizing his arms among the daughters of Lycomedes; approximately 12 smaller figure scenes surround this panel, mostly following a generic Dionysian theme, four around an inner perimeter, and eight around an external one.

The central panel follows for the most part standard contemporary iconography for this story: Achilles takes the center, charging forward with spear and shield, and he is surrounded by the usual melée of frightened women. What differentiates this panel from contemporary Pompeian versions is that there is no sight of the king and only one soldier present, while the woman trying to hold Achilles back – possibly Deidamia – is here seated on a throne in the centre of the picture next to him; and that the background

is a simple void, and not the palatial context normally depicted in the Pompeian versions (Trimble (2002)).

The scene as it is presented here showcases the male protagonist and his female consort, in his case emphasizing heroic virility and military *virtus*, in hers devotion and *concordia*. While this is not far off the use of this particular myth in the reception rooms of the Pompeian domestic context, what renders this appearance noteworthy is its location on the ceiling. First, this means that the mythological panel is placed in a less accessible position: having to look upwards, the viewer is required to make a special effort in order to experience the scene. Secondly, the panel is only properly visible for a viewer entering the room: to the viewer inside and facing outwards, the panel appears upside down. With these demands upon its audience, the ceiling panel can take a commanding role that clearly surpasses the arresting powers of a standard wall-painting. To explain the popularity of these panels in the Domus Aurea solely as another symptom of the emperor's general interest in spectatorship and theatricality, then, makes for an unsatisfactory interpretive halfway house.

A comparison with the Domus Aurea's ceiling panels' next of kin, Renaissance *di sotto in sù* or Baroque *quadratura* painting, is more profitable. These painting techniques were employed in ceiling painting to lure viewers to believe that perceptible space extended beyond the built architecture, as for example in Mantegna's Camera dei Sposi in the Palazzo Ducale in Mantua (1465–74). In contrast, the Domus Aurea panels are clearly not designed to generate illusionistic openings. Their purpose is the opposite: panels such as that of Achilles on Scyros, set in a non-space and with its main characters squaring up towards their viewers, reiterate the framework as established by the built environment and divert the discourse between viewer and painting back into the actual space of the room.

The confinement fostered by the ceiling panels could thus literally be read as a *carcer* (prison), the imprisonment Famulus' art suffered in the Domus Aurea according to Pliny (*Natural History* 35.37.120). By this I mean a prison not in the sense of curtailing the artist's choices or limiting his audience numbers but rather in an "imprisoning" perspective, in the way that the wall-painting facilitates an amalgamation of the technical and metaphorical meaning of space. Its result is a rich media environment, geared towards challenging the viewers on multiple levels, whether it be painting that is seemingly following the viewer, or ceiling decorations that choreograph perception. In short, the ceiling panels of the Domus Aurea create a space in which the audiences' experience is not extended by opening the view onto fantastic landscapes which allow the limits of architecture to be overcome, but instead assails them with multiple threads of meaning, combining the channeling powers of architecture and painting.

Neronian Wall-Painting in Perspective

Disconnecting the study of Neronian wall-painting from the persona of the emperor undercuts the idea that its primary traits are the promotion of spectatorship and theatricality: these are only symptoms of a more profound process ongoing in this period, the mixing of the technical and metaphorical meaning of space. What this means is that the mathematical dimension of spatial representation – the technicalities

of displaying objects in space, vanishing points and all – is explored alongside and with regard to its interdependency with the creation of meaningful relationships, whether they be narrative or conceptual descriptors in the shape of affirmative ideals embodied in the acts of mythological figures.

It would be a mistake to see this development as solely another symptom of the Neronian interest in perverting reality, as attested in the work of Seneca, Petronius, and Lucan (Bartsch (1997) 10 and passim; Castagna et al. (2002)). Nor would the quality of Neronian painting be fully captured by the assessment that it neither aims for the real nor fictitious, but is the attempt to create another world altogether, though a world that still has direct reference to reality (Perrin (2002) 388). It is not the creation of an inverted, an un-real world, that seems of interest in the use of wall-painting, but an interest in the processes with which reality and artificiality can be generated and upheld, including an exploration of the wide areas of overlap between them.

A key parameter in this exploration, on the level of perspective, is the assumption that space is a framework to generate not absolute and static but relative and dynamic relationships between objects and ideas. The result is the emergence of a range of different spatial designs throughout the Neronian period, ranging from the intersection of architecture and nature in Villa A at Oplontis to the intermingling of fiction and life-relevant ideals in the Casa del Menandro, arranged around a core of consecutive narrative, and the externalized, almost tangible storyscapes of the Domus Aurea.

All these solutions are connected by a shared interest in creating non-homogeneous spaces, non-homogeneous in the sense that technical and metaphorical properties of spaces are combined in various ways to overcome the dichotomy of reality and artificiality, and to create a pervasive form of virtuality. From this vantage point, even the two famous assessments made in the face of the Domus Aurea, Martial's *rus in urbe*, creating the countryside in the city (12.57.21), and Tacitus' verdict of the complex as designed "to try the force of art even against the veto of nature" ("quae natura denegavisset per artem temptare," *Annals* 15.42) are not so much an assessment of Nero's building program as documents to a dynamic understanding of space, a new spatial phenomenology.

The developments taking place in wall-painting during the Neronian period could hardly be attributed solely to the scheming of an individual, even if this was the emperor: their creative foundations are laid down before Nero comes to power, and their consequences are too profound and diverse to be explained by one single driving force. This is not to say that the building programs conducted under the imperial aegis remain without influence: the interest that pervades the rooms of the Domus Aurea, to fertilize the space in front of the picture, this tangible virtuality, will remain the key concern in the interior decorations of the Flavian period: but it is not explored in the decoration of the Domus Aurea alone, and it is not without contemporary decorative alternatives.

Perhaps most important of all is the role of the viewer, both in confirming why this type of wall-painting seems so fitting to Nero's mythologized persona and, then again, why it easily surpasses the confines of imperial authorship. While spectatorship is not the end-game of Neronian wall-painting, it is certainly its central preoccupation: to make the displays of non-homogeneous spaces work, the viewer's agency in homogenizing what is depicted is a necessary ingredient. This requirement automatically increases the share of individual production of meaning in any act of viewing and, conversely, seals

the engagement off from any attempt at arresting it at or channeling it towards any mono-dimensional message.

(Almost) in the words of Panofsky, the painting on walls such as those of the Domus Aurea may exude confinement and reduce the fictional to a mere subject matter for human consciousness; but for that reason, conversely, it expands human consciousness into a vessel for the virtual. Neronian wall-painting creates a stagecraft too powerful to be mastered by a director, even one as well-versed on the theater stage as Nero.

FURTHER READING

All Pompeian houses are described in detail in the *Pompei: Pitture e Mosaici* volumes (Baldassare et al. (1990–2003)), including bibliographies and numerous illustrations; exceptionally authoritative and exhaustive are the volumes of the *Häuser in Pompeji* series (for example: Strocka (1984); Stemmer (1992)). For Oplontis: De Franciscis (1975, 1979); Bergmann (2002); Clarke (1996). For the Domus Aurea: *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae* II (2004) 49–64, s.v. Domus Aurea (Fabbrini (1982)); also: Iacopi (1999); Ball (2003).

Stewart (2004) 74–92 and Strocka (2007) give an accessible introduction to the Four Pompeian Styles; Descoeudres (1994) offers a more critical perspective. Ling (1991) is still the best survey of the formal development of Roman wall-painting in English: for a more concise (and subversive) take, see Beard and Henderson (2001). The social dimension of Roman wall-painting is explained and extensively discussed in Leach (2004); Wallace-Hadrill (1994) and Allison (2004) offer important discussions of the relationship between wall-decoration and room use/function. Among the numerous general accounts of Roman wall-painting, Coarelli (2002), Croisille (2005), Pappalardo and Mazzoleni (2004), and Pappalardo (2009) provide useful sets of sample contexts.

The *Neronia* volumes offer various contributions on wall-painting (Société internationale d'études néroniennes http://www.sien-neron.fr/conferences-and-proceedings/?lang=en); for its open-minded approach towards Neronian artistic production, still unsurpassed, see Elsner and Masters (1994). A stimulating phenomenological discussion of the Fourth Style is Perrin (2002): compare also Croisille (1982). On wall-painting in the Domus Aurea: Peters (1981); Meyboom (1995); Meyboom and Moormann (2002); on theatricality in Roman painting, Picard (1982) and Moormann (1983). Clarke (1998) tackles the issue of spectator figures on Neronian walls; for spectator figures in general and Pompeian depictions of Perseus and Andromeda in particular, Lorenz (2007).

On visual narrative and the use of mythological paintings in the Roman context: Clarke (1991); Moormann (1993); Bergmann (1994); Brilliant (1984); Lorenz (2008). On *quadratura* painting: Sjöström (1978); on perspective as analytical category: Elkins (1994).

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PART IV

Reception

CHAPTER 22

Nero in Jewish and Christian Tradition from the First Century to the Reformation

Harry O. Maier

Modern readers who come to accounts of Nero in Jewish and Christian tradition are likely to leave bemused if not somewhat bewildered. Those who read the ancient Jewish and Christian beliefs about a Nero who will return from death and damnation as Antichrist will share Augustine's incredulity about such apocalyptic prognostications: "For myself I am astonished at the great presumption of those who venture such guesses" (*City of God* 20.10). Christian legends portraying Nero as the disciple of the arch heretic Simon Magus, an eternal fisherman in Hell angling with golden nets; or Jewish legends of a Nero penitent for unleashing the war that destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem but also the forefather of one of Judaism's most heralded rabbis, "master of the miracle" Rabbi Meir, are colorful tales from a lost world, barely recognizable to the modern secular west. Still, the Nero of Jewish and Christian tradition deserves a closer examination, for the ancient legends and myths associated with the emperor are valuable cultural currency, a way of engaging with and analyzing the world. Traditions about Nero furnished a basis, amongst other things, for reflecting upon and formulating ideals of government free from tyranny and lawlessness: Nero's violent end even furnished warrant for armed revolt against secular and religious tyrants. The Nero of Christian and Jewish tradition may even, disguised in our familiarities, live with us today.

Nero in Jewish Tradition: Destroyer of the Holy Nation, Father of Rabbis, *Redivivus*

Nero enjoyed a lively career in Jewish tradition that established the terms of his survival in the cultural imagination for a millennium. Notorious of course as the emperor who ruled at the commencement of the Jewish War, which led in turn to the destruction of

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the Jewish Temple, in Jewish polemic he is both pagan opponent of Judaism, destined for defeat, and a mythic figure in apocalyptic literature who will return from hiding in the east at the end of days to wage war against Jerusalem – only to be vanquished by a divine savior figure. This latter portrait, the kernel of the myth of a resurrected Nero – *Nero redivivus* – is rooted in popular beliefs recorded by Roman and Greek historians that Nero did not commit suicide somewhere in the suburbs of Rome after escaping a palace coup, but rather fled to Parthia where he was preparing an army to march on Rome to punish his adversaries. Roman authors recount several would-be emperors claiming to be Nero arising in the east (Tacitus, *Histories* 2.8.1; Dio 63.29.2, 64.9.3, 66.19.3; Suetonius, *Nero* 49, 57.2): Dio Chrysostom, writing half a century after Nero's demise, recounts that "a great majority" believed that Nero was still alive (*Orations* 21). It was above all the Jewish apocalyptic version of Nero's return that was to exert a great influence on the Christian imagination, beginning with the New Testament canon, and continuing into early Christian apocalyptic prediction, and thence into the medieval period.

Given such apocalyptic pronouncements from an early date, it is noteworthy that Josephus' representations of Nero – one of the earliest Jewish accounts of the emperor – are conspicuously restrained. A Jewish prisoner of war in Vespasian's military camp, Josephus prophesied that Vespasian was destined to become emperor and enjoy a glorious world-wide rule (*Jewish War* 3.392–408): a prediction that brought him Flavian patronage and residence in Rome. His restraint, then, in recounting the political abuses of Nero may reflect an apologetic agenda, offering a pro-Flavian portrait of Judaism (Rajak (2002) 203–17), for he obviously knows well the accounts of Nero "the madman" concerning whom "there are writers enough upon those subjects everywhere" (*Jewish War* 2.13.1). His Nero emerges rather as foil to Vespasian and Titus: when the slothful emperor fails to check abuses against Jews in the provinces (6.6.2), Josephus invites us to imagine a Nero who is terrified at the news of impending war, but simulates courage as he dispatches Vespasian to quell the uprising (3.3.1). Josephus conspicuously passes over rumors of Nero's escape and planned vengeful return, instead leaving him safely assassinated in the Roman suburbs: he thus avoids giving a voice to any remaining pro-Neronian sentiments amongst the populace such rumors might have intimated (Malitz (2005) 46–52).

Josephus' Jewish literary contemporaries were less circumspect in their evaluations of Nero. They creatively adapted rumors of Nero's flight and planned attack on Rome, and added vilification of his extravagances and character, to express nationalistic hopes and prophetic eschatological expectations. The *Sibylline Oracles* comprise a variety of vatic poems delivered by the Greco-Roman Sibyl, an ever-aging but deathless prophetess "possessed" by Apollo. Adapting the genre, Jewish and Christian Sibyllines issue a series of political pronouncements that predict the punishment and destruction of Rome (Collins (1983) 223–316; Lightfoot (2007).

Sibylline Oracle 4 and 8 represent the more straightforward historical redeployments of the Nero legend and assert Roman responsibility for the Jewish War. *Sibylline Oracle* 4.119–24 and 137–9 emphasize the corruption of Nero the matricide, and predict Nero's return as conqueror of Rome as punishment for its destruction of "the blameless tribe of the pious" (4.136). *Sibylline Oracle* 8.139–50 predicts that Nero will return to ravage, amongst others, "the nation of the Hebrews" after which he will destroy the Roman empire. More dramatically *Sibylline Oracle* 3.63–74 and 5.25–35, 93–110,

214–27, 361–85 transpose this use of the legend into apocalyptic mythology and in doing so turn Nero into a supernatural figure of evil that will find its way into the New Testament and contemporary Christian apocalyptic. In *Sibylline Oracle* 3, the seer identifies the rule of Nero with the Jewish figure of the evil angel Beliar. Here Nero is not so much *redivivus* as *incarnatus* (reborn): "Beliar will come from the *Sebastenoi*" (63) (i.e. the descendants of Augustus) and "perform many signs" (66) including raising the dead, geological and astronomical wonders, and "lead[ing] astray many faithful, chosen Hebrews" (69: on the Nero myth's presence in *Sibylline* 3, see Collins (1974) 86–7).

Sibylline Oracle 5 offers a similar mythologizing and cosmic account of Nero, placing emphasis on his historic infamy: "[A]thlete, charioteer, murderer, one who dares ten thousand evil things" (32), he "play[s] at theatricals with honey-sweet songs rendered with melodious voice" (41–2). He flees "Babylon" (= Rome) after seizing the Temple and burning its citizens (143; 150). Upon his return he "declares himself equal to God. But he will prove that he is not" (34). He will wreak havoc by waging war on all the earth's inhabitants and, most importantly, he will attempt to destroy Jerusalem (105), which will result in God sending a savior figure to oppose him and bring about a final judgment (110).

The importance of these texts for later apocalyptic appropriations of Nero and his role in end-time scenarios cannot be overemphasized, for taken together *Sibylline Oracles* 3 and 5 furnish the basic elements of what will emerge as the Christian Antichrist legend of the New Testament: a legend which does not just furnish a political portrait but also an apocalyptic role of the emperor for centuries to come. One of the more remarkable features of Nero's actions and vices in these texts is the way they take place in a tangled apocalyptic narrative timeframe, a feature that recurs in New Testament and thence in Christian tradition. Nero destroys Jerusalem only to return to try to destroy it again; Nero disappears only to appear again as embodiment of evil. These Sibyllines transform an historical figure into a blueprint for evil opponents of God who live in an apocalyptic frame, out of joint with regular time. Throughout, Nero's historical association with the destruction of the Temple is combined with the legend of Nero's return to anticipate a final cataclysm when Rome will be destroyed and Jewish faith will be vindicated.

Nero appears again in the Babylonian Talmud, a collection of rabbinic traditions dating from the second century AD and compiled from the fourth to eighth centuries. Here we encounter a Nero tradition strikingly at odds with apocalyptic tradition as the emperor becomes a Jewish "convert" or proselyte in order to stave off divine wrath for his destruction of the Temple. Babylonian Tractate *Gittin* 55b–57 (Rubenstein (2002) 37–54, esp. 41–2) presents Nero as agent of "the emperor" (sic!) who is manipulated into sending the Jews a blemished animal for sacrifice in the Temple (56a). Upon meeting a Jewish boy who prophesies God's punishment for the one who will destroy the Temple, Nero becomes a convert to stave off God's wrath and becomes in the tale one of the rabbinic tradition's most important figures, the second-century Rabbi Meir. Talmudic scholars have advanced a variety of theories to account for this tradition. Cohen (1972) argues, improbably, that Rabbi Meir's Anatolian origins have come to be linked with popular rumors of Nero's hiding in the east. Bastomsky (1969: 322–3) links the story with material that directly follows (*Gittin* 57b), showing how celebrated teachers have descended from wicked enemies of the Jews (for critique, Barrett (1976)). The classic study of Tannaitic literature by W. Bacher (1903: 2.5) interprets the legend

as a celebration of Judaism's power to convert even its greatest enemies. Alternatively it affirms divine providence by polemicizing against Roman overlords who are nevertheless used in divine service.

The Number of the Beast: Nero as Persecutor, Heretic, Antichrist in Earliest Christianity

Nero and his reputation exerted great influence on early Christian imagination. The Book of Revelation and contemporary extra-canonical Christian apocalyptic literature represent a thorough cosmological development of the myth of Nero's return, and history and legend again combine to envisage Nero as viceroy or incarnation of cosmic evil. The tradition of the martyrdom of Peter and Paul in the emperor's persecution of Christians circa AD 64, and Paul's descriptions of himself as prisoner for Christ gave rise to early apocryphal legends, some contemporary with second-century New Testament writings, which filled in the gap in the New Testament concerning their fate. These traditions joined to set the stage for early Christian representations of Nero especially as apocalyptic figure, the backdrop for further medieval developments.

First, a note on terminology. In what follows the terms "apocalyptic" or "apocalyptic eschatology" refer to a Jewish and Christian representation of time associated with divine intervention and judgment, usually at the end of time. The term "apocalypse" refers formally to a genre that consists of a number of literary elements often associated with but not confined to apocalyptic eschatology. "Apocalyptic literature" is a more general term that describes texts that are apocalypses or contain apocalyptic eschatology. The Apocalypse refers precisely to the final book of the Christian Bible.

It is no accident that a fully developed Jewish version of the Nero legend should appear in the Apocalypse of John. Its author is a Jew who straddles intertwining emerging Jewish and Christian traditions and who draws upon a shared repertoire of apocalyptic beliefs and images to condemn the imperial cult and the Roman political order. John, writing perhaps as early as during or shortly after the conclusion of the Jewish War in AD 70 (hence, *Revelation* 11:1–3; Marshall (2001) 88–97), combines reports of Nero's death with legends of his flight from Rome and transforms the emperor into a leading character in a reworked apocalyptic myth. *Revelation* 13 offers a thinly veiled account of the emperor as regent of the dragon, Satan, and of the imperial cult as symbol of an idolatrous political order (13.4, 11–15). *Revelation* 13.3 presents a beast with a mortally wounded head that has been healed and so outlines in full form the *Nero redivivus* myth. In 13.18 the number of the beast, 666 (in some other Latin witness manuscripts 616) manifests *gematria* (assigning and adding numerical values to Hebrew letters based according to their position in the alphabet), based on the transliteration of the name Nero Caesar from Hebrew (*qsr nrwn*, "Neron Caesar") into Greek, or from Hebrew into Latin (*nrw qsr*, "Nero Caesar"; Yarbro Collins (1976) 174–5; Aune (1998) 770–73). In 17.8 *Revelation* echoes the Beliar ascription of *Sibylline Oracle* 3.63 in assigning the beast's origin to "the bottomless pit." Similarly reminiscent of the Sibyllines is the beast's return, this time in allegiance with 10 horns (= kings), to destroy Babylon (= Rome; 17.16–17). Thus we have a full version of the Nero legend that will exert an enormous influence on the western imagination for centuries to come: a

revived Nero whose origin is the Underworld and who returns from death to wage war and destroy Rome.

The appearance of the Nero legend in the early-second-century *Ascension of Isaiah*, a text that developed independently of the Apocalypse (Hall (1990); Lietaert Peerbolte (1996) 194–205), attests to its importance in shaping the early Christian eschatological imagination. A Christian fragment (3.13–4.22) interpolated into a pre-existing Jewish text uses Nero's biography to describe the coming of Beliar (4.1–22), who descends "from his firmament" to become "a lawless king, slayer of his mother" and murderer of "one of the twelve" (i.e. Peter; 4.2,3). Echoing the Beliar description of *Sibylline Oracle* 3.63–66 as well as the descriptions of the beast of *Revelation* 13:11–14, he counterfeits God's power by signs and wonders and deceives the world, especially Christians, into worshiping his image, which he sets up in every city (4.11).

Outside of the Book of Revelation the New Testament contains no immediate reference to Nero. But as the canon developed and coalesced to include a number of descriptions of coming judgments and wicked figures, its other apocalyptic texts were wedded to the Apocalypse's descriptions; and even though they contained no reference to Nero, the result was further development of the emperor's mythic career. Jesus warns his disciples in the Gospels, "False Christs and false prophets will arise and show signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect" (*Mark* 13.22). In a description that was to become highly influential for later interpretations and eschatological portraits of Nero, 1 *John* 2:18 predicts "this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come" and then continues, "the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world" (1 *John* 2:22). Elsewhere the apocalyptic portrait of 2 *Thessalonians* 2.3–12 predicts a "man of lawlessness . . . the son of perdition" who "takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God" (vv. 3–4).

These writings, gathered in the same canon, came in due course to bear a common-sense relation to *Revelation* 13:11–14. By aligning and associating them with the reign of Nero, Christians won for the emperor an historical role in either directly embodying or foreshadowing a figure to come in a divinely appointed arrangement of the end of days (Hughes (2005). Jerome (*Epistles* 121.11, 56; Hilberg (1996) *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* (*CSEL*) 56, 66) and Ambrosiaster (*Commentary on 2 Thessalonians*; Vogels (1968) *CSEL* 81, 2.7), for example, commenting on 1 Thessalonians 2:7, "For the mystery of iniquity is already at work", interpreted "the mystery" as the reign of the Antichrist, inaugurated by Nero, and at work in the Roman empire: a view that was to exercise considerable influence for centuries to come. In this early period, Ambrosiaster offered the most thorough interpretation, one that would later exert considerable influence. Here Nero is the "son of the devil" and his advent has initiated the reign of the mystery of iniquity, a dominion that can be detected in the later anti-Christian emperors Diocletian (284–305) and Julian (355–63). In making these links, both writers display a common contemporary use of biblical apocalyptic literature in general, and of the apocalyptically mythologized figure of Nero in particular: to point directly to contemporary rulers and events as overt or identifiable manifestations either of Nero or the lead-in to the Second Coming. Augustine, famously impatient with this type of direct identification, dismissed such inter-canonical historical assignments as vain prognostication and was skeptical of those who discovered versions of "Nero *redivivus*"

concealed in biblical texts (*City of God* 20.19). Yet his dismissal betrayed their popular appeal. The fourth-century *Martyrdom of Peter*, a popular devotional hagiography, refers to "the Antichrist Nero" without commentary (2; Lipsius and Bonnet (1959) 1.2).

An apocalyptic Nero was one product of the New Testament and its interpreters. Another was the apocryphal emperor. Nero is in Christian tradition the emperor who tried and condemned Paul (*Acts* 27:14; 2 *Timothy* 4:16–18) and executed Peter (*John* 21:18–19): a tradition that was sealed by linking their deaths with descriptions of Christian martyrdom in 1 Clement 5.2–7, as well as the account of Nero's persecution and burning of Christians by Tacitus (*Annals* 15.44). The representation of Paul's last days in the pseudonymous 2 *Timothy* 4:16–18 (perhaps as late as AD 150) is witness to the growth of legendary material to furnish descriptions of the apostles' fate where historical evidence was otherwise lacking. Here Paul, abandoned in a Roman prison, writes for his delegates what is effectively his last will and testament. Having been tried once and having escaped "the lion's mouth," he nevertheless represents himself ready for martyrdom (4.8). In *Acts* 27:14 he is under house arrest and meets with Roman Jews for daily debate as he awaits his trial.

These canonical accounts proved irresistible for further legendary treatments. The second-century apocryphal *Acts of Paul* and *Acts of Peter* offer tales of the apostles' engagements with Nero in their final days. *Acts of Paul* (3–6) makes the emperor Nero jealous of the "true king, Jesus Christ" when Paul steals soldiers from the emperor's army to make them soldiers for God. An inflamed Nero arrests Paul, burns a number of the converted soldiers and then beheads Paul, only to be haunted by Paul "the soldier of God" who appears before the emperor as a ghost and promises God will punish him for his evil deeds. In the *Acts of Peter* the Roman Prefect Agrippa crucifies Peter upside down for converting his concubines and teaching them sexual abstinence, but Nero, not to be outdone, condemns his Prefect for dispatching the apostle before he could torture him himself (4; 9; 12). Then follows a vision that teaches Nero that he is no match for Christ's servants, and the emperor, fearing an untimely end, stops persecuting the church. These accounts, especially in their treatments of the continence of new converts, bear the literary marks of contemporary Greco-Roman novels, but with a Christian polemical twist. Their proliferation under various titles reflects their popularity and shows how the figure of Nero lingered in the western imagination for centuries.

As these accounts developed they projected Nero onto an increasingly fantastic stage with improbably dramatic results. In the fourth- or fifth-century *Acts of Peter and Paul* and *Martyrdom of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul*, the early legends are transformed into a lively story of the apostles' confrontation of Simon Magus (Ferreiro (2005)). According to *Acts* 8:9–24, Simon was a magician from Samaria who was condemned by the apostle Peter for attempting to buy the power of the Holy Spirit upon his conversion to Christianity. In these later traditions Peter and Paul meet with Simon before Nero, who has now become Simon's disciple after hearing Simon vilify the apostles and proclaiming himself the incarnate son of God (adding heresy to the early Christian list of the emperor's wickednesses). Notwithstanding the apostles' rebuttals of Simon's claims and their ability to outperform his miracles, Nero remains Simon's dupe. After the apostles bring about Simon's death the emperor beheads Paul and crucifies Peter, again upside down. Nero thus proves himself doubly wicked: both disciple of Simon and murderer of the apostles. The *Acts* and *Martyrdom* made their way from Greek

into the Latin west as the *Passio Sanctorum Apostolorum Petri et Pauli* (''The Passion of the Apostle Saints Peter and Paul'': Hennecke and Schneemelcher (1964) 575; Lipsius (1959)): a text that exerted an enormous influence on the medieval imagination and won a place for Nero and Simon Magus alongside Peter and Paul in medieval iconography (Callegari (1892); Jakob-Sonnabend (1990) 183–4) and mystery plays (e.g. Arnoul Greban's *Le Mystère des Actes des Apostres*, in Walter (1957)). Another legend from the Suda (a tenth-century Byzantine lexicon: see Adler (1928–38) 3.455–66) but drawn from earlier sources (Zecchini (1999)), has Nero as a man who having ''spare time for philosophers and . . . examining closely the things concerning Christ'' becomes irritated when he learns that Pilate, Caiaphas, and Annas have crucified Jesus. He summons them to Rome for interrogation, imprisons Pilate, and releases Caiaphas and Annas who defend themselves by appeal to Jewish Law. An interrogation with Simon and Peter similar to the ones found in the *Acts* and *Martyrdom* then follows.

In these legends Nero was not the only pagan to take an interest in Jesus. More measured but no less fanciful was Paul's appearance in the court of Nero in epistolary form. A legend composed between the fourth and seventh centuries offers an apocryphal correspondence between Seneca and Paul (Elliott (1993) 547–53; Fürst et al. (2006) 3–107). The letters are an apology for Christian faith. In Letter 11, Seneca describes recent fires that have destroyed Rome and decries ''that ruffian . . . whose pleasure is murdering'' for blaming Christians and Jews and putting them to death. An intriguingly similar application recurs in *The Epistle of Annaeus Seneca concerning Pride and Idols*, an apocryphal correspondence from the second half of the fifth century AD, formerly thought to be Jewish but now generally accepted to be of Christian provenance (see Fürst (2006) 176–97). Here the author adopts the pseudonym of the High Priest Annas to write a letter to Seneca unmasking the errors of Greco-Roman polytheism as idolatry and urging him to worship the one true God (3–5). Nero lurks in the background as ''Annas'' describes Seneca as long-suffering victim of the emperor's megalomania (2). Both apocryphal letters exploit the biography of Nero's most celebrated victim as a means to demonstrate the superiority of Christianity and monotheism.

The Great Presumption of Interpretation: Nero in Early Christianity

The apocryphal *Acts* and their successors alert us to the vibrancy and elasticity of Nero's career and the legends that accompanied it in the first centuries of the Christian era. Early Christians drew on available Greco-Roman historical accounts of Nero's career, emphasizing the historical records of his immoderation (Jakob-Sonnabend (1990: 104–32). Orosius (late fourth century) shows his dependence on Suetonius (*Nero* 6.30) and so does Eutropius (*Breviarum ab Urbe Condita* 7.14) in his colorful representation of an emperor whose wickedness included a fondness for ''fishing with nets of gold, . . . drawn up with cords of purple'' (*Historia Adversus Paganos* 7.7): the image that, along with that of incestuous matricide, was to follow him through the Middle Ages into the Renaissance. But early Christian historians remembered Nero primarily as the initiator of the first – in some accounts empire-wide – persecution of Christians, and especially for his responsibility for the martyrdom of Peter and Paul (Lactantius, *De Mortibus*

Persecutorum 2; Orosius, *Historia Adversus Paganos* 7.7; Eusebius of Caesarea, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 2.25.1–8). In a flight of imagination, Lactantius even has Nero attack the Jewish Temple on account of Peter's success in converting people to Christianity! Sulpicius Severus in *Chronicon* 2.29 presents the flight of Nero from Rome as historical fact, and includes the belief that "even if he had put an end to himself with the sword, his wound was cured, and his life preserved, according to that which was written regarding him, 'And his mortal wound was healed [*Revelation* 13:3],' in order that he may practice the mystery of iniquity [2 *Thessalonians* 2:7]." The account blurs the lines between history, legend, and New Testament apocalyptic, and reveals how productive Nero was for the early Christian imagination.

As we have already seen, allegedly historical material combines with the obviously legendary to offer colorful portraits of Nero's dealings with Christians. The homilies of John Chrysostom on Paul's letters are scattered with passing references drawn from apocryphal accounts to the apostle's last days in Rome (Rougé (1968) 79–87), and attest to how well known these accounts were to his hearers, and how they could be used for exhortation and instruction. In *Homily* 10 on 2 *Timothy* 4:16, extolling the virtues of Christian endurance and devotion, he recalls a scene from the apocryphal acts where Nero beheads Paul on account of the apostle's conversion of the emperor's cup-bearer.

A developing tradition of apocalypse interpretation in commentaries on New Testament apocalyptic texts created a transhistorical role for Nero. Early Christian commentary reveals the enduring power of stories associated with Nero, especially the legend of *Nero redivivus*, and their ability to generate multiple apocalyptic narratives. Nero's popularity is revealed in Jerome's *Commentary on Daniel*, which states that many contemporaries share his viewpoint that "Nero was the Antichrist because of his outstanding savagery and depravity" (11.30). Amongst these was Victorinus of Pettau (writing around 270) who offers the earliest direct extra-canonical reference to the *Nero redivivus* myth in his *Commentary on Revelation* (17.16): God resurrects the suicide Nero from Hell as king of the Jews to deceive both Christians – whom he convinces to circumcise themselves – and Jews to confirm him as Christ. Nero as Jewish Messiah arises from the melding together of *Revelation* 13:3, 11–18, and 17:11 with 2 *Thessalonians* 2:4, where the "man of lawlessness" takes his place in the Temple. A resurrected Nero also finds a central role in commentary on the Apocalypse found in the poetry of Victorinus' contemporary, Commodian (Poinsotte (1999) 201–13). He deploys motifs seen above in the Jewish Sibyllines, especially in references to Nero's return from exile to destroy Rome and then attack Jerusalem: Nero, raised from the dead, will first burn "the whore Babylon" and then march on Rome acclaiming himself as Christ and deceiving the Jews to acclaim him as God's servant (*Instructions* 41.13–20; Dombart (1887) *CSEL* 15, 26–7). Still more elaborate is his *Carmen Apologeticum*, a poem loosely based on the Apocalypse. It predicts the coming of two Antichrists (891–954; 172–96), a *Nero redivivus* who will appear "from hidden places at the very end of the earth" to persecute Christians and a second figure who will persecute Jews and destroy the earth. "A man from Persia will call himself immortal – as Nero is Antichrist for us, so shall this one be for the Jews" (*Carmen Apologeticum* 926; 175).

Sulpicius Severus' records of alleged conversation with Martin of Tours (316–397) have Martin similarly predict the coming of a *Nero redivivus* alongside a second apocalyptic figure (*Dialogues* 14): an interpretation that echoes in Sulpicius' *Chronicon*

(Vaesen (1988 49–70). Here, Nero is distinguished from the Antichrist. First Nero rules the western portion of the world persecuting Christians and inducing gentiles to worship him as God. Then the Antichrist rises in the east, conquers Nero, establishes his throne in Jerusalem and makes people worship him. Here apocalyptic expectation is high: Martin believes that the Antichrist has already been born and lives somewhere in the empire as a young boy. A recension of the anonymous *Book of Genealogy* (615–16), a fifth-century Donatist chronicle, uses *gematria* to decode the number of the beast of *Revelation* 13:18 (here 616) as Nero (Gumerlock (2008) 347–60). The Antichrist comes as Nero, or a Jewish antichrist will come in the spirit of Nero. Quodvultdeus (died around 450) interprets the eighth head of beast described in *Revelation* 17:11 as a reference to the coming Antichrist, as *Nero redivivus*, pondering whether he will appear in the same form as Nero, or under a different aspect but retaining his "luxury, foulness, cruelty, and habit of life" (*Dimidium Temporis* 8.15, 20–30; Braun (1976) *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina* (*CC SL*) 60, 201). Later in his interpretation of the two lamp stands of *Revelation* 11:4–13 Quodvultdeus draws on the legend of Peter, Paul, and Simon in Nero's court by reading Peter and Paul as figures for Elijah and Enoch who will come and oppose Antichrist and the false prophets arising from his reign (13.22, 20–24; 60, 207). Taken together these formulations reflect the surplus of meaning of a developing Antichrist legend formulated from pre-existing traditions and popular beliefs, and as such, they anticipate the dramatic developments to come.

To locate Nero as either an ancient or coming figure represented in New Testament apocalyptic texts was by no means universal and sometimes received vigorous opposition. Augustine was "astonished at the great presumption of those who venture such guesses" concerning *Nero redivivus* and the historical identity of Antichrist (*City of God* 22.19). Lactantius (*c.* 240 – *c.* 320) no doubt has Victorinus and Commodian in mind when he refers disparagingly to the enduring power of the Nero legend in apocalyptic expectation. The "sudden disappearance" of the emperor Nero has led "some persons of extravagant imagination" to apply to him Sibylline verses that describe the matricide as returning from "the uttermost boundaries of earth," and so turn him into the "forerunner of Antichrist" (*De Mortibus Persecutorum* 2). Similarly, the North African Donatist commentator on the Apocalypse, Tyconius, expressed amazement at those who conflated the legend of *Nero redivivus* with the beast of *Revelation* and particular historical figures (Beatus of Liebana, *Commentary on the Apocalypse* 6.7.28–31; Sanders (1930) 508). Instead he pioneered an alternative model of apocalypse exegesis that was to exert a great influence on Augustine and subsequent apocalyptic roles for Nero.

Augustine later distinguishes between those who assign historical characters or powers, like Nero or the Roman empire, to specific biblical apocalyptic texts, and those who read those texts more figuratively as descriptions of hidden things awaiting full revelation (*City of God* 22.19). Augustine thus stands in opposition to the exegesis of apocalyptic literature in the early church as represented above. Instead he follows the exegetical methods of interpretation of apocalyptic texts outlined by Tyconius in his *Book of Rules* (Babcock (1989)). Here, and in his now lost *Commentary on the Apocalypse* (Bonner (1966) 21–9), Tyconius outlined a typological, anti-apocalyptic method of interpreting the Book of Revelation that had a profound influence in shaping the interpretations of Augustine and his successors (Markus (1970) 117; Christe (1979) 111). Tyconius accepts the belief in a literal Antichrist coming in the future, but interprets him as a

symbol of unbelief and wickedness, constituting a hidden *corpus Antichristi* in the world. Augustine promotes Tyconius' spiritual and transhistorical understanding of figures of wickedness like Nero, and their associations with the Antichrist.

In an illuminating study of the interpretation of apocalyptic language of 2 *Thessalonians* 2:4f. in early and medieval Christianity, Hughes (2005: 23–4) distinguishes two types of apocalyptic exegetes in this period: realists and spiritualists. Apocalyptic realists are those who read New Testament apocalyptic texts as predictions of historical events still to come or which are believed to unfold with Christ's coming. This is the kind of interpretation that linked Nero as inaugurator of apocalyptic events (as in the interpretations of Jerome and Ambrosiaster above), or as a figure who returns to fulfill biblical prophecies (as in the Sibylline prophecies and their adaptations amongst the authors just discussed). By contrast, "Latin spiritual interpretation" – the kind championed by Tyconius and Augustine – is skeptical of such historical identification and favors interpretation of an Antichrist who is "*immanent, internal, and deceptive*." Any relation between texts and events is a mystery until all is revealed at the world's end.

When applying this interpretation to Nero, the emperor functions as an illustration of moral and spiritual wickedness: not so much the forerunner of Antichrist, as the embodiment of him. Hence texts that refer to Nero in passing do not do so to chart his role in a forthcoming drama, but to illustrate the moral and spiritual drama unfolding in their readers' midst. This Latin spiritual tradition of apocalyptic exegesis provided an important foil to the realist tradition as it unfolded in the medieval period. However, even where the more spiritual interpretation prevailed, commentators listed amongst varying opinions attributions of apocalyptic texts to Nero past or future. In the medieval realist tradition and beyond, Nero continued to enjoy a posthumous career, a career made possible in large part by the colorful and sinister biographical details that accompanied his memory. The memory of Nero from legend and myth, as we will see, became a potent means of contemporary political critique in periods of turmoil and social dislocation (Lobrichon (1988) 221–41; Goetz (1988) 306–32); Rauh (1988) 333–58).

Nero's Long Shadow: The Life and Times of a Tyrant in Medieval, Renaissance, and Reformation Tradition

Earlier medieval authors followed writers like Lactantius in directing their attention to Nero's part in the first imperial persecution of the church and in chronicling Nero's vices through classical sources and ancient ecclesiastical historians, especially Suetonius and Orosius (see, e.g., Gregory of Tours (AD 538–594), *Historia* 1.25; Bede (AD 672/73–735) *Ecclesiastical History* 1.6.). Others recorded without judgment apocalyptic beliefs formed in earlier centuries about the return of Nero at the end of the age (e.g., Otto von Freising (1114–1158) *Chronikon* 3.16). But from the twelfth century onward such sources were highly embellished and became increasingly, often exotically, anecdotal, in rehearsing Nero's reputation for limitless wickedness. Gwyn (1991: 424–25) shows how Renaissance treatments of Nero take up the typical vocabulary and motifs of Roman political invective in the late Republic, in addition to summarizing treatments of the earlier "reception of Nero": namely cruelty, insolence

and arrogance, capriciousness and lust, impiety, greed, and violence. We may see these categories at work in classical and late antique historical accounts of Nero, especially in the report by Orosius that was to prove so influential in medieval treatments. To cite but one example, the *Speculum Regum*, an epic poem by Gottfried von Vitirbo (*c.* 1125–1191/92) chronicling the rise and fall of rulers from earliest antiquity on, draws widely from these categories in an extraordinarily colorful narrative of the vices that accompanied Nero from his rise to his last days. Alongside the by now traditional account of Simon Magus' influence over Nero, the death of Nero, his persecution of Peter and Paul, his multiple marriages, murders, and incestuous relations with his mother, Vitirbo includes a gruesome description of his dissection of his mother's womb after her death to observe the place of his conception (9.909–11).

The thirteenth-century German epic poem, *Die Kaiserchronik* ("Chronicle of Emperors"), offers a similarly detailed account (4083–306, esp. 4108–13). It develops a bizarre tale of Nero's pregnancy and birth of a frog! Nero's earliest detractors had included amongst his many vices his playing the part of a bride in mock weddings. This became the source of legends of the emperor's pregnancy (Zecchini (1999: 112–21). The *Chronicle* of John, Bishop of Nikiu (seventh century; 70.206; Charles (2007) 53) embellishes the tale: after anal sex Nero's belly swells as though he were pregnant. Nero in great pain calls upon his doctors to relieve him; thinking that he is about to bear a child they cut open his stomach and so kill him. The *Kaiserchronik* (4128–64) expands the legend of Nero's pregnancy with the help of etymology and the Apocalypse. Nero now commands his doctors to make it possible for him to give birth. Although they object that this is contrary to nature, they concoct a potion to impregnate him. A worm gestates in Nero's belly and becomes a great frog that springs forth from his mouth. Thence, explain the authors of the chronicle, comes the name of Nero's palace, later the Pope's parish church, the Lateran, from *lata rana* ("born frog"). The account also reflects the influence of the Nero Antichrist legend: *Revelation* 16:13 has "foul spirits like frogs" spring forth from "the mouth of the dragon, the mouth of the beast and the mouth of the false prophet."

In Italy and in France authors offered similarly embellished accounts. Boccaccio (1313–1375) included in the seventh book of his *Fates of Illustrious Men* a biography of Nero drawn largely from classical sources and Orosius which portrayed Nero as "the monster of the universe" and offered detailed accounts of his gluttony, promiscuity, and extravagance. The *Roman de la Rose* works with Boethius's biography of Nero to offer a lengthy description (6175–488) of Nero's excesses as it chronicles the emperor's rise and swift descent into vice in a reign orchestrated by Fortuna. The illuminated manuscripts that preserve these tales included magnificent images of the by now stock features of an immoderate ruler: Seneca's suicide, the execution of Poppaea, the murder of his mother, her dissection, and the emperor's suicide (Dahlberg (1995): illuminations with critical text can be found at the *Roman de la Rose Digital Library* of John Hopkins University and the Bibliothèque nationale de France).

The French medieval *Chansons de Geste* offered similar accounts (see Langlois (1974) 488; John (1953) 90–5). These reports exercised an enormous influence on the English literary imagination. Chaucer's account of Nero in *The Monkes Tale* (575–662) represents Nero as a wicked tyrant and borrows from both the *Roman de la Rose* and Suetonius in narrating Nero's fondness for fishing with golden nets (587–9) and the dissection

of his mother's womb (595–7). Nero's immoderation finds its way into Shakespeare's *Rise and Fall of King John* where "the Bastard" calls the invading French usurpers "ingrate revoltes," "bloudy Nero's, ripping up the Wombe / Of your deere Mother-Englande" (*King John* 5.ii.152–3; see too, e.g., *Henry the Sixth, Part 1*: 1.iv.95–6; *Part 3*, 3.i.39–40).

These vices were part of the larger profile of the emperor as political tyrant. As we will see, apocalyptic labeling of political rulers as Nero, even *Nero redivivus*, was ready to hand in medieval battles between church and state. Alongside that lively tradition – perhaps as a consequence of it – non-apocalyptic political deployments of Nero were widespread from the later Middle Ages through the Reformation. John of Salisbury's (1120–80) *Policraticus* (8.18) foreshadows later political uses of Nero as a study in vice and tyranny. Alongside a description of Nero's tyranny John offers a lively account of the emperor's death and reports his lament "I live foully, I die shamefully" as he flees those who seek to bludgeon him to death.

Such medieval treatments were the sources for a renewed Humanist interest in Nero. Machiavelli's *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Livy* (*c.* 1513) holds up Nero, Caligula and Vitellius as examples of poorly governing princes who depend on armed forces to prop up vicious tyrannical rule, and compares them with good emperors like Marcus Aurelius who enjoyed the security of stable rule by virtue and self-control (1.10). Erasmus in his *Institutio Principis Christiani* (1516) cites Nero, together with Caligula and Heliogabalus, as exemplary of the "evil plague of a prince [who] combines great power with the greatest malevolence" and as devoting "whatever resources he has to the destruction of the human race" (Cheshire and Heath (1986) 220). In similar vein, Luther holds up Nero together with Caligula as a negative foil to the Christian prince who shows that right governance weds power with justice.

Not surprisingly, these motifs found frequent application in Reformation critique of the papacy. Luther is fond of comparing the power of the Pope to the tyrannical power of Nero. The fusion of civil and ecclesiastical rule in the papacy, according to Luther, violates the theology of the Two Kingdoms and corrupts the spiritual rule of Christ by mixing it up with the political rule of Caesar (see *Luther's Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 50: 290–1; vol. 51: 239: for might without right, vol. 53: 453). Radical reformers such as Thomas Münzter in his *Prague Protest* offered similar comparisons between the papacy and Nero (Baylor (2000) 8), but also went much further. The anonymous *To the Assembly of the Peasantry*, sometimes attributed to Andreas Karstadt but in tone much closer to Münzter, turns the tables on Luther by calling for the abolishment of the hereditary rule of German princes and for a violent uprising to overthrow their oppressive government: "to knock Moab, Agag, Ahab and Nero from their thrones is God's highest pleasure" (Baylor (2000) 118). John Calvin imagines the just church–state relation following the model of a just theocracy. In his *Institutes* (4.2.3) he contrasts the just Republic and "the tyranny of Caligula, Nero, Heliogabalus, and the like" in order to distinguish the governance of the true church with the tyranny of Rome. We have seen Shakespeare invoke Nero as a corrupt tyrant in his historical plays, in creative redeployment of the biographical tradition; in doing so he also reflects contemporary political use for this medieval heritage. The most astonishing political use of Nero in this period, however, comes from Jerome Cardono's *Encomium Neronis*, written shortly after 1561/62 (Eberl (1994)). The *Encomium* is a celebratory biography of Nero that praises the emperor

for his rule as a benevolent despot who put limits on the power of the Senate in favor of Rome's non-aristocratic citizens, and who used his power to pursue a foreign policy with Parthia directed at peace, the abolishment of indirect taxes throughout the Roman empire, and the limiting of the oppressive practices of *publicani* (public contractors). In Cardano's reading, Nero also pursued new initiatives in science and engineering and sought to limit public executions and gladiatorial shows. Cardano assesses the reports of Nero's earliest biographers, especially Suetonius and Tacitus, as propagandistic and based on ideologically freighted historical sources. His Nero is rather a hero of the people, a champion of justice, and equitable in his exercise of despotic power. The account has given rise to enormous debate concerning whether it is an ironical or intentionally paradoxical biography. Eberl (1999: 227–38) suggests Cardono used his *Encomium* to offer a veiled critique of the tyrannical rule of Milan's political overlords, the Spanish nobility, and its aristocratic rulers (which had left the city in financial ruin and executed his son). In this light it reads as a dramatic example of the uses of Nero to assert political ideals and values and to outline a theory of just rule and government.

If Nero the Prince practiced a wickedness that was legendary, Christian tradition imagined a divine punishment no less epic. As early as the first century, Plutarch in his treatise "On the Delays of Divine Vengeance" imagined Nero tormented in the afterlife for his life of vice, and satirized Nero's singing abilities by imagining him reincarnated as a frog (*Moralia* 567f: see Fantham in this volume). Medieval portraits relished in identification of Nero with the devil. In one of the *Chansons de Geste*, the fictional Renaut de Montauban identifies Nero as the devil himself alongside Pilate and Judas (Michelant (1862) 220, 251), and the *Chanson d' Antioche* sees him as a devil from Hell, "diable d'enfer" (Paris et al. (1848) 37, 300). The *Kaiserchronik* records how upon his death the devil came as a black bird to spirit away Nero's soul whilst leaving his body for wolves to devour (4292–306). Medieval mystery plays show the devil inspiring Nero's dissection of his mother, and Nero invokes the devil to come and take him to Hell upon his suicide. Satan then dispatches a chorus of demons to take the emperor's soul to the Abyss while they chronicle the details of his evils and predict, "Nero, without dying, thou shalt perish; From this blow thou shalt know the meaning of hell, / never shalt thou have relief." (Greban, *Le Mystère des Actes des Apostres* in Walter (1957) 319). In Rabelais' (1494–1553) *Pantagruel*, Epistemon during his fantastic tour through Hell sees Nero, "a blind fiddler" (2.30). In *King Lear* (3.vi.7) Shakespeare has Nero in Hell, not fiddling, but fishing; Edgar reports that "Nero is an angler in the Lake of Darkness."

Given such a wide repertoire of associations it is no surprise that Nero continued to occupy an important place in the medieval apocalyptic imagination. Often Nero appears in exegetically steered apocalyptic commentary, influenced largely by Ambrosiaster's figuration of Nero as Antichrist. Thus the Carolingian Haimo of Auxerre (died *c.* 875) interprets "the mystery of iniquity already at work" as the devil working "secretly through his own members, Nero and his princes" (*Expositio in Epistolam II ad Thessalonicenses* 2.7; Cartwright and Hughes (2001) 27). Similarly, Adso of Montier-en-Der (died 992) in his tract, *Concerning Antichrist* lines 11–12 (Verhelst (1976) 22) develops Haimo's thinking further to include Nero with Antiochus Epiphanes IV and Domitian amongst the many wicked ministers Antichrist has sent into the world (Verhelst (1973) 52–103). The later *Glossa Ordinaria* (Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 121, 535) reflects medieval

consensus when it interprets Nero as the shadow of the coming Antichrist in the same way in which David and Abel prefigured Christ. In addition commentators like Haimo also dutifully passed on by way of citation the more literalist belief that Nero was to return before the end of time, even if they did not personally endorse it. Peter Lombard's *Magna Glossatura*, the standard medieval commentary on Paul's letters, reported that some believed that Nero had been "snatched away" (*potius subtractum*) "in the vigor of his life" (*in vigore ipsius etatis*) to return as Antichrist (*Collectanea in epistolas Sancti Pauli*, *Patrologia Latina* 192, 319).

Apocalyptic conceptions of Nero were deployed as potent tool for political engagement and analysis of contemporary events. A tradition in which both Nero and even Simon Magus were types and shadows for a coming Antichrist and false prophet allowed for a pointed analysis of the contemporary affairs of state and church, especially in the monastic circles where the learned observed conflicts between the Holy Roman Emperor and the Pope. Such typological exegesis became an especially potent resource for critique in 1080 during the Investiture Controversy, when in order to promote his political agenda the Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV deposed Pope Gregory VII and installed in his place Guibert of Ravenna, the anti-Pope Clement III. To legitimate Gregory's deposition, Henry, claiming a pedigree that could be traced back to Augustus, had a letter forged purporting to be the last will and testament of Nero. Here the last Julio-Claudian leaves responsibility for the security and peace of his empire to his successors in perpetuity and gives them authority to expel anyone who disturbs the peace and well-being of his dominion (Konrad (1966) 13).

In response, a long tradition of eschatological belief and legend surrounding Nero became a powerful means of political resistance and criticism. A series of twelfth-century theologians, known as German Symbolists, redeployed the realist apocalyptic tradition of earlier centuries (without the eschatological timetables that often accompanied it) to assess contemporary events through the lens of Christian apocalyptic typology (Rauh (1988) 333–58). Thus Rupert of Deutz (*c.* 1075–1139), a Benedictine theologian, deploys the legend of *Nero redivivus* as a means of political resistance but without any expectation of the end of the world: Nero and Simon Magus, he writes, "now have come back to life [*nunc revixerunt*]": "the dragon made mighty / here now rules (*draco factus ingens / hic modo regnat*," *The Calamaties of the Church of Liège* 3.30,35: Böhmer (1897) 627)). A contemporary of Rupert, Gerhoh of Regensburg (1093–1169), inspired by 1 *John* 2.17–19 ("antichrist is coming, so now many antichrist have come"), lists Nero amongst a series of antichrists (Herod, Decius, Julian the Apostate) who collectively formed the spirit of Antichrist in the world. In his *On the Four Watches of the Night* (Sackur (1897) 503–25) Geroh, obeying Christ's command to his disciples to keep watch through the night (*Matthew* 16.40), deployed an elegant and sophisticated typology to investigate the coming of antichrists through the four watches that comprise church history. Three have passed and now with the accession of Henry IV and his successors and their persecution of reformist popes the final and climactic watch has been inaugurated. As "impious and impure" Nero – "the first and principal Antichrist" – persecuted the "two most notable witnesses, the two burning lamps, the two olive trees, the two lamp stands radiant with the light of truth," i.e. Peter and Paul (14, 514–15), so now the Antichrist of the fourth watch, Henry, persecutes and sends into exile "the two witnesses, two lamps, two lamp stands," Gregory VII and Urban II (18, 521).

The brilliant interpreter of biblical apocalyptic, Joachim of Fiore (1135–1202) ushered in a whole new world of Nero speculation with his reading of the Old and New Testaments as prefiguring the history of the church, with the Book of Revelation furnishing the key to history's conclusion. As with earlier commentators, the Antichrist/antichrists of 1 *John* 2.17–19 become a means of reading a history of evil (Lerner (1985) 553–70). In his *Exposition on the Apocalypse* 8 (1964, fol. 10ra–va), Joachim interpreted the seven heads of *Revelation* 17:3 as representations of a series of antichrists who have come into the world, in which Nero was the second of five, with two soon to appear. These were anticipations of the one Antichrist of 1 *John* 2.18, represented by the seventh head, whose coming Joachim predicted would be in 1256/7, a date that was to become especially important as we shall see presently. Joachim echoes earlier apocalyptic exegetical tradition when he makes Nero and Simon Magus types for the Beasts of Land and Sea (*Exposition* 168r; cf. *Revelation* 13:1–10 and 11–18). In the *Book of Figures*, where Nero again appears as the second head of the seven-headed beast, Joachim treats him together with Simon typologically: "He [Antichrist] will perform great signs before him and his army, just as Simon Magus did in the sight of Nero" (Tondelli, Reeves, and Hirsch-Reich (1953) Table 14, 9–55; trans. McGinn (1979) 137).

These ideas gave rise to intricate apocalyptic scenarios amongst successive followers of Joachim (Reeves (1969)) such as John of Rupescissa (*c.* 1310–66), a Franciscan who – despite the fact that he spent most of his life in prison – was one of the Middle Ages' most prolific authors of apocalyptic prophecies and commentaries. John's *Vade Mecum in Tribulatione*, which takes the form of 20 "*Instructions*" and offers detailed descriptions of the imminent advent of Antichrist and the end of the world, furnishes a compendium of his apocalyptic and prophetic views. These were formed in a period of social and economic turmoil that led to the peasant uprising of 1358 (DeVun (2009) 32–51), and reflect his belief that a luxuriating papal curia was about to swept away in a tide of apocalyptic violence (*Instruction* 7: Brown (1690) 500) and turned over to a pure and poor mendicant Franciscan, the Angelic Pope (*Instruction* 19: Brown (1690) 506–7). John predicted from a set of calculations based on *Daniel* 12:11 the arrival of two antichrists between 1365 and 1370 (Reeves (1969) 323). An eastern one (*Instructions* 9 and 10: Brown (1690) 500–2) will come to persuade the Jews to worship him as Messiah. The western Antichrist will be *Nero redivivus* (*Instruction* 8: Brown (1690) 500) who will return as Holy Roman Emperor to rule for three and a half years of tribulation, lay waste to the world, and destroy all its cities. No doubt reflecting the stirrings of revolt around him, John was unique in his belief that in the coming apocalypse the peasants would rise up to overthrow the oppressive French nobility and that the Angelic Pope would conquer Nero Antichrist.

Perhaps the most versatile application of Nero traditions belongs to the Joachites, those who were disappointed by Joachim's prophesies and reconfigured the Nero legends as a means of political resistance to the Hohenstaufen emperor Frederick II (1194–1250). Joachim had predicted the Antichrist would come in 1256/7, a date that at the time was seen to coincide with the emperor's reign. Charging him with heresy and sacrilege, Pope Innocent III deposed Frederick at the ecumenical council of Lyons in 1245. Like Henry IV before him, Frederick pursued an aggressive policy against antagonistic popes and as he made his way with his army to discuss his excommunication with Pope Innocent, Joachite observers saw the emperor as a Nero Antichrist who would depose

Pope Innocent and install his own Simon to rule alongside him: an apocalypse-inspired mode of historical critique common amongst the Symbolists from the previous century. But Frederick's sudden death from dysentery in 1250 (seven years in advance of the Great Tribulation predicted by Joachim) resulted in a dramatically new application of the *Nero redivivus* myth: a rumor arose amongst some Joachites that Frederick was to return from the dead to complete his rule as the Antichrist; others placed the Antichrist/Nero mantle on successors to the throne, even a third Frederick yet to come (Lerner (1988) 370–2). This represents perhaps the most thorough and creative reworking of the *Nero redivivus* legend outside the New Testament.

Whether tyrant, immoral, persecutor, damned, mold for the coming Antichrist, or the returned Antichrist himself, the medieval, Renaissance, and Reformation treatments of Nero offered their audiences inexhaustible resources for reflection on the world around them, and speculation on events to come. From the early church onward, as well as in Jewish tradition, Nero came back to life not once, but again and again in a culturally productive posthumous career. In doing so Nero – historical, legendary, and mythical – became a key figure in articulating the expectations, fears, and ideals of generations.

FURTHER READING

There is no comprehensive study of the reception of Nero in Jewish and Christian tradition for the period this essay considers. Warmington (1969) is the only English consideration of Nero's *Nachleben*, but only by way of passing in considering classical sources, and without reference to Reformation traditions. His bibliography is an excellent resource and has been foundational to this study. A number of essays and monographs focus respectively on Nero in Jewish tradition, the New Testament era, the early church, and especially the medieval period. No dedicated study exists on Nero in Renaissance and Reformation writers. Barrett (1976) and Bastomsky (1969) offer excellent accounts in English of Nero in Jewish tradition and Rubenstein (2002) offers translations of the Talmudic legends. The specialist will refer in addition to Bacher (1903) and Bodinger (1989). Collins (1974, 1983) offers detailed discussion of the Jewish as well as Christian Sibylleana. Yarbro Collins (1976) remains the definitive account of the Nero and the *redivivus* traditions in the Book of Revelation. Bousset (1999, a republication of the nineteenth-century study) remains a classic discussion though not dedicated exclusively to Nero. Jenks (1991) and McGinn (2000) demonstrate the uses of Jewish tradition in the Christian formulations of Nero Antichrist. Elliott (1993) and Hennecke and Schneemelcher (1965) gather and translate many Christian apocryphal Nero legends; Lipsius (1959) remains the critical edition and contains legends awaiting translation. Furst, Fuhrer, Folder, and Walter (2006) furnish a critical text and discussion of the Seneca–Paul correspondence. Hughes (2005) considers Nero in early Christian and medieval Pauline commentary. A number of foreign-language studies devote themselves exclusively to early Christian Nero traditions, of which Jakob-Sonnabend (1990) is now the definitive account that also offers a brief chapter on medieval treatments. Rougé (1968) is an indispensable complement. Since Simon Magus is so regularly associated with Nero in early traditions, Ferreiro (2005) is critical. Many primary texts appear in the public domain in antiquated nineteenth-century English translation (Coxe (1978); Schaff et al. (1978); http://www.ccel.org/fathers.html/). Surveys of medieval uses of Nero appeared in the nineteenth century (pre-eminently Graf (1833) and Geffcken (1899)). The Italian study of Pascal (1923) supersedes them and offers what remains the most thorough overview to date; Walter (1957) offers a survey based almost entirely on Pascal and has the benefit of an English translation. There is no modern study. The massive *Monumenta*

Germaniae Historica (1826–present; online at http://www.mgh.de/) is the chief compendium of medieval texts; Pascal (1923) and Konrad (1966) offer representative accounts. McGinn (1979) contains some translations of texts considered here. Langlois (1974) offers an index of references to Nero in the complex multivolume *Chansons de Geste*, most of which await translation but are now in the public domain. Gwyn (1991) is the sole study of Nero in Renaissance political treatments and beyond. Budd (1935) offers a limited discussion of appearances of Nero in late medieval and Elizabethan English literature.

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CHAPTER 23

Haec Monstra Edidit. Translating Lucan in the Early Seventeenth Century

Yanick Maes

In many ways, the period starting in the late sixteenth century and ending in the early eighteenth can be considered to be a true *aetas lucanea*. At the same time this period saw the beginning of the decline in Lucan's standing. The *Bellum Civile* became a source of intense creative activity. To paraphrase Ternaux's study, citation from, imitation of and creations based on Lucan's epic abounded throughout the whole of Europe (Ternaux (2000)). The poem is passionately discussed, dissected, deprecated, and praised, activity made possible by a cornucopia of editions (most with commentary) and the 17 published translations made throughout the century, stemming from seven different linguistic and cultural traditions. The three English translators of Lucan use blank verse (Marlowe (1600)), octosyllabic couplets (Gorges (1614)) and heroic couplets (May (1626), (1627)); French translations are in prose (three different versions from de Marolles (1623), (1647), (1654)) or the verse form of alexandrines (Brébeuf (1654–5)); the two contemporary Polish translators use rhyming alexandrines (Bardziński (1691)) and, remarkably, the *ottava rima* (Chróściński (1690)), a rhyming stanza form of Italian origin in the writings of Giovanni Boccaccio; the Italian versions are, for the most part in the pedestrian *verso sciolto* a non-rhyming usually 11-syllabic verse form (Abriani (1668); Campani (1640); Robillo (1680)), while only the last (Meloncelli (1707)) uses the more "epic" *ottava rima*.

These translations thus result from different translational norms. Moreover, many translations can be considered to be active retranslations, the reasons for which lie with the translators' entourage, their publishers, their readers, and their specific position within their cultural and political landscape (Pym (1998)). My translingual point of view should make it easier to reveal the specificity of each translation, while yet detecting surprising similarities across the different traditions. These in turn will allow us to develop a more thorough appreciation of Lucan's influence even as he was denounced through

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the prism of normative Aristotelian poetics, condemned for not falling into categories which he did not know existed (see Walde (2010) 456–8). For some critics it became impossible to regard Lucan's work as an epic poem, or they denied him the status of poet *tout court* (see, e.g., Papajewski (1966)). Quintilian's remark (*Institutio Oratoria* 10.1. 90) that Lucan is above all to be read and imitated by rhetoricians (rather than poets) is turned into a condemnation of the poet as being a mere *rhetor* (MacLean (1990) 26–44 discusses the importance of Lucan in English debates on the interrelation between poetry, history, and truth; cf. also Dinter 2012, ch. 3). Lucan's poem was thus frequently considered deviant in literary theoretical terms (Zeller (2009)).

The current interest in Lucan's seventeenth-century reception, at least in the English-speaking world, is for the most part due to his importance in the constitution of a republican literary tradition (Norbrook (1999)). In this vein, the provocative aesthetic stance of the poet and deep pessimism of the poem is recuperated as part of a political project. This one-sided outlook is only one part of the story and runs the risk of obscuring other ways of reading the *Pharsalia* that were prevalent or at least possible. It seems that modern politico-ideological readings of the poem have been somehow transferred to the seventeenth century. On the other hand we cannot deny Lucan's political and sometimes also very topical relevance: historical reality often made objections against Lucan's epic sound hollow indeed. In this period, civil war, driven by religious differences, tore France apart (Bailbé, 1980), while the Low Countries split after a nasty war with their Spanish rulers, in which opposition against absolutist rule and religious conflict were both powerful motives. Such events were not without relevance for late Elizabethan and Jacobean England (Dilke (1972); Koppenfels (1991)), where an as yet undefined republicanism was more or less tangible in literary form (Cheney (2009)). Later in the same century, England's bloody road to republicanism (and back again) runs almost parallel to the horrors of the German Thirty Years War, once again a conflict driven by strong religious sentiments (Norbrook (1999)). All these events find their reflections in translations, editions, and works inspired by the *Pharsalia*.

One might hold, with Mildonian (1995), that the relationship between source text – Lucan's epic – and target text – the translation – is established first and foremost by mapping present concerns on the script of the past and less by linguistic opposition, competition, or comparison. Rather than being a mere transposition of the Latin text, the translation becomes a means to set up some sort of continuity between present and past. Narrative poems on contemporary topics, for their part, used techniques similar to Lucan's to explore the troublesome subjects they treated, not least among which is the tendency of discourse to invade narrative in an attempt to confront the political and religious problems of the day. Many epics thus no longer represent a communal point of view but express highly individual and widely diverging world views (Méniel (2004)). Tracking the translation history of Lucan in the seventeenth century is eminently suited to elucidate the complex interweaving of different motives, as many translations grafted themselves on contemporary concerns but also had to wrestle with Lucan's often frustrating poetic form. In this chapter we will focus on developments in the young Dutch Republic, and in addition pay short visits to London, Caen, Paris, and Venice.

Focusing on the Dutch Republic is particularly fruitful because here interaction with Lucan was intense, especially in the first half of the seventeenth century. The Republic

was an intellectual powerhouse and printing center in western Europe, with links to numerous other countries. My tour of the seventeenth-century history of Lucan will show that a thorough analysis of the complex translation network will provide us with a better understanding of the origins of many preconceptions that still haunt Lucan studies today. Perhaps more importantly, the translational vagaries of Lucan's epic in the seventeenth century open up new perspectives into the workings of the *Bellum Civile*'s aesthetic world, helping us to arrive at an understanding of the elements that make Lucan's poem such an appealing and yet disturbing one.

The Shadow of Scaliger

The uneasy fascination of seventeenth-century readers of Lucan led to some particularly virulent reactions, with admiration and aversion side by side. Frans van Oudendorp's 1728 edition (Leiden: Samuel Luchtmans), the impressive tail end of 150 years of editorial activity on the poet, is a case in point. This edition is almost 1000 pages in quarto format, taking in many earlier commentaries, reprinting introductions from other editions or literary historians, and even offering the readers studies by seventeenth-century scholars. One might thus assume that it was a work of love. Not so. Lucan, van Oudendorp confesses in his address to the reader has more faults than attractions. In many respects this poem is a failure: the subject is not chosen with insight, the style is hopelessly swollen, even arrogant, the poet acts schoolmasterly and along the way forgets to tell a story, he knows no bounds whatsoever and the work teems with redundant descriptions of storms, portents, fights, or magical phenomena that all too often end in childish absurdities.

But, van Oudendorp continues, even with all his faults Lucan does not deserve to be left lingering in literary limbo. This poet may not be on a par with Virgil or Valerius Flaccus (imagine that!), but he does have his redeeming points (*dotes*). First, his love of freedom (all the more daring and remarkable given that Lucan lived under a tyrant), but also his purity of language, offering a learned and earnest discourse and much food for thought on philosophical and political matters.

Notice the contradiction with the list of shortcomings, a recurring feature of Lucan's reception history: not knowing what to make of Lucan's poetics, one can always try to tame the text by focusing on the theme of political liberty, compensating for a lack of aesthetic sensibility in the politico-moral lesson. The ambivalence of van Oudendorp and many others before and after seems to be grounded in the dark humor and pessimistic outlook of Lucan's difficult verse, the violent unbalance of the *Bellum Civile* unsettling our commonly internalized classicist poetic rooted in the *Aeneid*. Such negativity dominates Lucan's reception (with the significant exception of mediaeval readers, who may reduce the epic to a compendium of knowledge but frequently also exhibit a subtle understanding of the poet and his fictional world (Von Moos (2005)). Though in this period Lucan's poem was often treated as the second great Latin epic from antiquity, this position was never self-evident.

Most seventeenth-century texts that stress polarity between Virgil and Lucan can be traced back to the judgment of Julius Caesar Scaliger's *Poetices Libri septem* (posthumously published in 1561: see Ternaux (2000) 132–40). To Scaliger *castitas* (purity)

and *frugalitas* (simplicity), exemplified by an outstanding show of *modus* (measure) and *pudor* (restraint), are the main qualities associated with Virgil. Lucan, on the other hand, knows no bounds and his affectation (*kakozelia*) exerts tyrannical force on the reader (book III *Idea*, p. 294 of the second edition from 1561). Scaliger reserves his most extended judgment of Lucan for his sixth book, the *Hypercriticus*, in which he offers his readers a prescriptive history of Latin literature. At times Lucan barks instead of singing (844); often he makes mistakes or shows ignorance. Finally Scaliger reworks a passage from *Bellum Civile* 4, to show how Lucan's wild imagination can be brought back within in the bounds of reason (849–850, illustrated in Baca (1973)).

Yet with all his vitriolic aversion for Lucan's stylistic and rhetorical extravagancies, Scaliger *does* consider Lucan to be a proper poet. Indeed, Scaliger's conception of poetry fits Lucan better than that of his Aristotelian predecessors or successors, for Scaliger holds that poetry has an important role to play in the constitution of politics, and that literature must be read and analyzed within a moral and philosophical framework. And the ultimate aim of writing literature, according to Scaliger, is to provide people with the rules for moral behavior, helping them to reach happiness: the *ars oratoria* and *ars poetica* are twins, influencing each other mutually, both are disciplines with a clear moral and political aim (book VII *Epinomis* 900–1). Thus Scaliger has no problem with the invasion of the authorial voice into Lucan's epic, the moralizing outrage that surfaces again and again – except when the poet praises Nero sycophantically and hypocritically (book V *Criticus* 762). What does make Lucan flawed is his inborn proclivity for excess (book V 717) "and a constant craving for success that leads to his talking nonsense" (book V 680).

In his *Apologia* ("Defense"), written in 1629, Jacques Le Paulmier de Grentemesnil (Jacobus Palmerius) considered this character assassination by a new Caesar a repetition of the first real murder of Lucan (Berckel (1704) 125). The *Apologia* was, first and foremost, a retort to scathing remarks about Lucan's blunders with regard to astronomical details by Scaliger's son, Joseph Justius, scattered throughout the foreword to his Manilius edition (the second, improved version of which appeared in Leiden in 1600). In the framing parts of his defense of Lucan, however, Palmerius maintained that when comparing Lucan with Virgil, one was comparing opposite artistic temperaments and as such he felt no need to prefer the one to the other. Both excelled at what they tried to achieve.

A critical voice is also present in the discussion of Lucan in *De Tragoediae Constitutione* ("On [the Definition of] Tragedy") of Daniël Heinsius, the favorite student of Joseph Scaliger in Leiden (the work was first published in 1611, revised in 1643). A presentation of Aristotle's poetical ideas, the book can be considered one of the fountainheads of later classicist poetical thought, especially in France (Duprat (2001) 7–98), and offers something of a recantation of Heinsius' previous much more mannerist and Baroque leanings. It comes therefore as a surprise to read here that "Virgil is not greater than Lucan, but rather similar: for the reason for their writing and the times in which they wrote differed" (although so, Heinsius goes on, Lucan was a child of a time of corrupted eloquence, and therefore could not stand serious comparison with Virgil, or any other classical poet). Palmerius on the other hand did not restrict his defense of Lucan to this sort of historical relativism, but like most critics who supported Lucan, and contrary to Heinsius, he tried to strengthen his case by shifting the discussion to the political level. Aesthetic polarity equaled political and ideological disparities. Virgil, the encomiast of

Augustus, was cast as the poetical champion of an autocrat, while instead of support the freedom fighter Lucan incurred the envy and deadly hostility of a tyrant.

The same line of thought is behind the title page – and the verses prefixed to it – of Thomas May's 1627 Lucan translation (MacLean (1990) 35–7) and is exactly what hampers any proper appreciation of Lucan. By shifting from poetic to political appreciation once the moral lesson becomes obsolete we are left with nothing: the poet has evaporated. In fact, Scaliger does offer a much more strictly aesthetical point of view, despite his stress on the moral and political aims of literature. His admiration for Virgil does not prevent him from severity in his judgment on the poet's relation to his *princeps*, calling Augustus a butcher and asking why the poet squandered his divinity by praising this abject man (end of book 5, 761). This weakness offers an opening: unsurpassable in matters of form, imitation of reality, and stylistic accuracy Virgil might be, but as regards morality the matter is less clear. Alas, Lucan failed on this score too, for the epic of indignation against Caesars begins with abject praise of Nero (761–2). Virgil at least was no hypocrite. Though the *laus Neronis* sat uncomfortably alongside the republican message of *Bellum Civile*, this eulogy was most frequently read as a highly ironic exercise in paradoxical *encomium*. Take, for example, Henri De Boulay's *Il Nerone difeso di Luciano*, a dialogue in Lucianic – i.e. satirical – style published in Venice in 1627, in which Nero defends himself before the Underworld judge Minos by putting most of the blame on Seneca (De Boulay (1627) 126–61: cf. Carter (1997) 180–83). But there was also room at this time for "genuine" rehabilitation of Nero. The praise of Nero by Gerolamo Cardano – written in the middle of the sixteenth century, but reprinted at least three times in the seventeenth century – is at the very least a warning against the pernicious hold of commonly held opinions on the truth, but in its revisionary presentation of Nero's deeds it might even be read as a political or philosophical tract (Galimberti Biffino (2002)). It most certainly was read as being exactly this in mid-century Amsterdam, where a new edition was published in 1640, followed by a translation into Dutch by the astonishingly prolific translator Jan Hendrikz Glazemaker (Glazemaker and Cardano (1649)). In his foreword, the translator expresses his own surprise at the success of Cardano's exercise which resulted in a convincing rehabilitation of the emperor on serious, political grounds (Van der Poel (2005), esp. 293–6).

Lucan among the Protestants

Although the Jesuit engagement with Lucan was perhaps not as negative as some have held (Burkard (2009), in contrast to Dörrie (1976)), Protestantism, more than republicanism, is the important common denominator connecting Lucanian reception in western Europe. The Lucan network, a group of men of letters held together by correspondence, publications, and travelling scholars, had a limited number of geographical centers: a few regions or cities where important scholarly activity was concentrated in a number of printing shops, universities, and *académies*. The Netherlands could be considered to be the very heartland of this activity, with particularly strong links with England and France, as the Dutch Republic, with its steady output of ideas, science, and, of course, books, became a crucial space for the diffusion of intellectual

ideas (Frijhoff, Spies, and Van Bunge (1999) 63). This intellectual dynamism was fuelled by substantial immigration from the Spanish Netherlands, but also from France, Poland, Spain, and Germany.

De la Fontaine Verwey (1979: 9) proposes that three factors were of central importance in the extraordinary resurgence of the book-publishing scene. First, the Reformation stimulated a steady stream of religious writings and opened up a market for new editions of the Bible. Secondly, the influx of intellectuals from the south turned Leiden into a prominent centre of study and academic publishing. Finally, Amsterdam's development into a port with worldwide connections created much wealth and, in turn, much need for professional books, such as atlases and shipping manuals. Indeed, by the middle of the century Amsterdam had become the most important centre for the production of books in Europe (Bots and Berkvens-Stevelinck (1992)): the Netherlands had turned into Europe's "intellectual entrepôt" (Gibbs (1971)).

This lively storehouse for (literary) ideas contributed in important ways to the Lucan-reception in western Europe. Before looking into the Dutch reception of Lucan, let's take a quick look at one of those foreign works printed in one of Holland's printing shops: the *Supplementum Lucani* of Thomas May (Backhaus (2005)). The first edition of this work, which supplements the 10 books of Lucan's epic and takes the story of the *Bellum Civile* down to Caesar's murder, was published in Leiden and is dated 1640 (May (1640)). May's continuation of the unfinished Latin epic, which soon replaced the 11-line ending that Sulpitius had provided at the end of the fifteenth century, was routinely part of many subsequent editions and even translations (it is also featured in van Oudendorp and both Polish translations, Bardziński (1691) and Chróściński (1690), with Chróściński even extending the continuation to Actium – Chróściński (1693): on the ending of the *Bellum Civile* see Hardie in this volume). The *Supplementum* was itself a corrected Latin version of May's previously published English *Continuation* of Lucan's epic (1630). When opening the *Supplementum* one is struck by the remarkable frontispiece, the iconography of which builds upon the poem, *The Complaint of Calliope against the Destinies*, that May had written for the first edition of the *Continuation* in 1630. In Lucanian style we see an emaciated Lucan in the Underworld being offered a cup by Calliope, filled with her own blood. This illustration was made by Frederik van Hulsen, who also drew the frontispiece for May's Lucan translation from 1627, a scene representing Lucan's suicide and accompanied by Martial's famous epigram on Nero's hostility to Lucan (*Epigrams* 7.21.3–4). Van Hulsen was deeply involved in radical Protestant milieus, had apparently stayed in London during the mid-twenties before settling in Frankfurt, and had important contacts with the Englishmen in exile in the Netherlands. He made many drawings for anti-Catholic and anti-Arminian (a Dutch school of theology based on the views of Jacobus Arminius) volumes, among which are works by John Reading, a strict Calvinist but certainly not a republican, and George Carleton, one of the English representatives at the Synod of Dordt (1618–19). The meaning of van Hulsen's engraving for the *Supplementum* is quite obvious: revived by this sacrifice, Lucan's spirit has entered May's own blood.

May's Latin supplement offers, if anything, a sanitized version of Lucan's poetic excesses and peculiarities, eschewing in particular the anatomically precise descriptions of gore (Runacres (2010)). The English version of the accompanying poem was extended for the 1650 edition with verses that represent Caesar's assassination (the last event

recounted in the *Continuation*) as an act of redemption for Lucan's forced suicide. The new ending to the introductory poem, and its relation with the picture, are discussed for their implicit republican politics by David Norbrook (1999: 225–8), which given the instability of May's political stance and his final choice for the republican side would seem quite logical. Yet, the supposedly even more republican Latin *Supplementum* which was published 10 years earlier, had not only featured the Latin version of the extended Calliope-poem, but also another one by the "royalist" Richard Fanshawe.

When read carefully and put into context with other works (as is done in Pugh (2010) 151–74), the latter poem, which combines in its allusive network Lucan with Virgil, clearly illustrates that critique of monarchical absolutism does not need to be read as endorsement of a republican ideology. It is simply not plausible that this work should be considered an emanation of a republican ideological stance. It would seem to me that this reading is produced by our own preoccupations.

The same observations apply to the way in which the Lucan translation of May's fellow Englishman Arthur Gorges is ideologically situated: some consider it anti-tyrannical (Burrow (1993) 189), others deem it to be a vehicle to transport oneself "out of a monarchical language" (Norbrook (1999) 42). Recently Gibson (2003) has made a convincing case that this translation had an advisory role for Prince Henry, the elder son of James VI/I, and as such it might have been critical of James' politics. However, it should certainly not be considered to be a republican manifesto, although the shifting circumstances (i.e. the death of Prince Henry in 1612 aged 18) changed the frame of reference considerably. It is probably best to assume that rather than presenting its readers with a republican ideology "ready-made," Lucan's poem is good to think with in times of muddy ideological division and wavering alliances.

In addition, the ambivalent attraction of Lucan's Caesar, a charismatic overreacher, should make us suspicious of simplistic republican readings of both the Latin epic and its translations (Walde (2006); Paleit, (2010)). The drawings that illustrate the 1670 French translation of de Brébeuf, for example, present a heroic Caesar, while the post-revolutionary edition of 1796 portrays him as a miscreant and gives much more space to Pompey's tragic fate (Tucker (1971)).

Lucan in the Netherlands

The Dutch Republic formed an important, if not the central, axis of European Lucanism. Leiden was its intellectual centre, where Justus Lipsius' influence was felt long after his departure from the university in 1591. The interaction between Lipsius and Lucan certainly warrants deeper research, as does the role of the poet in the development of what is usually called *tacitism*. The word *tacitism* is used to indicate a certain moral realism in historiographical discourse and a stylistic ideal, found in works from the mid–16th (starting with Lipsius' momentous works) to the eighteenth century that took their inspiration from the Roman historian Cornelius Tacitus (Van der Poel and Waszink (2009); Waszink (2010)). In the major study of this tradition (Jansen (1995)) Lucan features only sparsely. It is in Leiden too that Grotius published a much reprinted and imitated edition of the *Bellum Civile* in 1614, on which he had been working since 1607, and which would be followed by subsequent revisions and

the publishing of a final version in 1643. With this Lucan edition Raphelengius was continuing a tradition, for the press of the publishing family Plantin, the *Officina Plantiniana*, had brought out at least seven Lucan editions between 1564 and 1612 (Witkam (1982) 267).

The first of these, dating from 1564, was made by the tireless amateur philologist Theodor Poelman (Poelman (1564) with reprints in 1576, 1592, 1593, 1605, and 1612). Only a couple of years before the official start of the Dutch Revolt, with the tensions generated by the Spanish (religious) policy in the Netherlands rising, Poelman used his edition of Lucan as a warning against civil unrest, driven by religious discontent. The examples from recent times that he mentions in his foreword are the Münster Rebellion of 1535 and the French wars of religion that had just started a few years earlier. Little did he know that within four years William of Orange – who was to marry Louise De Coligny in 1583, the daughter of the French Huguenot leader Gaspard De Coligny – would start the conflict with the Spanish. The first phase of this war ended, provisionally, with the fall of Antwerp in 1585, one year after William had been murdered.

In the wake of this traumatic experience, Lucan's specter continued to hover, especially over the Spanish. In the same year that the Spanish army took control of Antwerp two different editions of Laso de Oropesa's prose translation of Lucan into Spanish, which had been first published more than 40 years ago, were printed there (Laso de Oropesa (1585a), (1585b) – the former probably a pirated version of the latter). The next year the same printing house produced an edition of the first and second parts of Ercilla's *La Auracana* (Ercilla y Zúñiga (1586): the complete three-part edition would follow in 1597). This remarkable poem on the conquest of Chile was strongly influenced by Lucan (Nicolopulos (2000); Quint (1993) 157–85). Its portrayal of the Spanish imperial project does not lend itself to simplification and as such it could be read as an endorsement of the imperial project no less than as a critique of Spanish bloodthirstiness (Kallendorf (2007) 77–102). The Dutch certainly read the poem the latter way, even though in it the Netherlands were cast as "the godless state" (Schmidt (1999), with 461–5 on the influence of Ercilla's Chile on the Dutch). In Dutch imagination the repression of the Indians became a repetition of the Spanish disdain for the rights of their subjects to which they themselves had fallen prey.

The events of these early decades of the Dutch revolt were also turned into a Lucan-cento (a patchwork poem consisting of recycled lines from Lucan's epic) by Pierre Chrétien (published in 1588, with a second edition in 1590 and a pirated edition from 1589: see Glei (2009)). In this work the uprising is presented as a civil war, started by the devilish, and fallen, William of Orange. For Chrétien the rebellion is in complete contradiction to the divine order of the world, which calls for the existence of the Spanish empire as a guarantee of right and order, and of the true faith.

On the protestant side, Agrippa D'Aubigné produced another Lucan-cento, on the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre. Although on a much smaller scale (only 125 lines), it was composed of verses taken from almost every book of the *Bellum Civile*, with a clear predilection for books 1, 2, and 9 (Plan (1945) 165–8; Ternaux (2000) 149–59). The poem's title is *Classicum*, and that is exactly what it was: a battle-signal heralding the continuing struggle of the Huguenots, who might lose some fights but could never be defeated. The identification of contemporary figures with Lucan's characters is

encouraged by the claim made by the poet that his cento differs from traditional centos in that "the sense is not changed" (*non mutatur sensus*). The poet-narrator mostly speaks in Cato's voice, using the great harangues from *Bellum Civile* 2 and 9, but in between he is distinctly "Caesarian." This is most certainly the case at the end, where the assertion of the inevitability and the expediency of a (new) civil war recycles Laelius' vow of faith to Caesar (*Classicum* vv. 110–25; cf. *Bellum Civile* 1.359–86).

Grotius' Lucan and the Twelve Year Truce

Around the time that Chrétien and D'Aubigné wrote their utterly opposed centos, the tide of the Dutch–Spanish war started to change, favoring the north: a development partly due to the combined efforts of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, an extraordinary politician and diplomat, and Maurits of Nassau, the new Prince of Orange and a rather talented general schooled by Lipsius (on Oldenbarnevelt, see den Tex (1960); for Maurits, see Van Deursen (2000)). By 1600 however a rift between their different characters started to become increasingly manifest, and when Oldenbarnevelt brokered the Twelve Year Truce with the Spanish in 1609, in order to be able to sort out the economic, civil, and religious structure of the newly established state, he did so against Maurits' wishes. It is around this time that Lucan began to play a prominent role in the debates. Fundamentally, the Dutch were attracted to the poet because they read the *Bellum Civile* as a poem that questions the legitimacy of power and probes the difficult difference between justice and injustice (Crum (1980); Dörrie (1976)). The epic became a powerful presence amidst the mounting internal conflicts during the Twelve Year Truce (on which, see Israel (1998) 421–49).

Both Grotius' 1614 edition and the first (and to date only) translation of Lucan into Dutch (Storm (1617), (1620)) must be considered against this background. During the 1610s the political conflict between Maurits and Johan van Oldenbarnevelt was acted out on a different level. The Arminians presented five points of disagreement with Calvinism to the states of Friesland and Holland in 1610, which earned them the name Remonstrants. The text was written by Johannes Wtenbogaert, chaplain of the court of Prince Maurits and spiritual heir to Jacobus Arminius. Reaction followed immediately, with the opposition, led by the Flemish Franciscus Gomarus, being dubbed Counter-Remonstrants. Soon the unity of the young Dutch Republic was threatened by this religious conflict – in which the different sides even tried to involve James VI/I (this extraordinarily complex situation is well sketched by Rabbie (1995) 2–35). Van Oldenbarnevelt, who was not an Arminian, persuaded the States of Holland to take a position of tolerance – differences on obscure theological doctrines should be left to private conscience – and in 1613 Hugo De Groot (Grotius) was asked to draft an edict to implement the States' policy.

The so-called Tolerance Resolution (drawn up in 1613, and taken in January 1614) was intimately connected to Grotius' controversial, pro-Remonstrance and sharply polemical booklet *Pietas Hollandiae ac Westfrisiae Ordinum* (known as the *Pietas Ordinum*). The book did not help to calm the situation down at all, and Grotius immediately started work on a second, more toned-down edition of the *Pietas Ordinum*, which probably appeared early in 1614.

Grotius' Lucan edition followed in April 1614, close on the heels of this toned-down affirmation of principles, and was soon circulating among academics. He discusses the work for its political relevance to the conflict with the Spanish, only hinting at the religious troubles in letters that accompany copies of his book sent to his friends (Molhuysen (1928)). Although he is wary of dissociating internal from external politics (and especially politics from religion) in his presentation of the *Bellum Civile*, it is clear that Grotius felt the need to tread carefully: publishing a Lucan edition in these times could be seen as a provocation. It is noteworthy that he only sends his Lucan to his inner circle, particularly to those people whom he had consulted when smoothing out the rough edges in his *Pietas Ordinum*. One was sent – with a copy enclosed for Janus Gruterus – to Georg Lingelsheim, a much-respected member of the *literati*, sympathetic to Grotius' religious stance and secretary of the Elector Palatine Frederick V, Maurits' nephew and son-in-law to James VI/I (Walter (1999)). Gerard Vossius, Grotius' lifelong friend and supporter, and Isaac Casaubonus, the Huguenot intellectual, each received a complimentary book too, as did Daniël Heinsius.

Grotius' letter to Heinsius that accompanied his Lucan (number 330) is the most famous, and probably also the most revealing. In it Lucan is praised for his aristocratic leanings, his sense of liberty, and his hatred of tyranny: the perfect champion for the cause of the Dutch against the Spanish. And, as Grotius slyly adds, this work at least won't bother the theologians. Vossius for his part received the book graciously and expanded upon the Spanish–Dutch relations in his reply (letter 328): considering Lucan's Cordoban origins, a rather obvious conceit.

The distinction between religious conflict and justified resistance to an unjust ruler was paramount to Grotius' conception of the Dutch Revolt. Both in his pamphlet *Liber de antiquitate Reipublicae Bataviae* (Grotius (1610)) and his Tacitean *Annales et Historiae de Rebus Belgicis* (largely finished in 1612 but, due to conflict from 1618, only published in 1657), he all but neglected the religious angle. Indeed, given the conception of Tacitism in the early seventeenth century, the model that Grotius adhered to in his historical work of necessity implied a strong penchant towards secular political realism and a certain degree of moral relativism (Waszink (2010)). In both works the revolt is defended as the legitimate fight of the aristocratic regents to maintain their rights and privileges against the Spanish king who had misused his power (Nellen (2007)156 with further references; Ridderikhoff (1994)). That this preference for an aristocratic regime, quite typical of Grotius (Israel (1998) 421–2; Tuck (1993) 152–69), is clearly part of his reading of the *Bellum Civile* is also indicated by the use of Lucan's pleading for fame for his protagonists, in particular Pompey, and himself in *Bellum Civile* 7.207–13 as opening motto to the edition itself. The absence of a transcendental framework or divinely steered perspective will have appealed to the Tacitean editor, too.

Grotius' aristocratic and secular political outlook in addition colored his conception of the religious conflict as a clash between enlightened worldly leaders and retrograde Calvinist extremists who appealed to the plebeian instincts of their largely immigrant following (Van Dam (2001) 8). This preference for aristocratic regentship provides a strong connection between Grotius' engagement with Lucan and that of the Venetians, who, together with the Romans from the early Republic, were to become one of the role models for the self-image of the newly established Dutch Republic after the Peace of Münster (1648). Indeed, Grotius had expressed a deep admiration for the Venetian

constitution and a sense of similarity between the two maritime republics as early as 1599 (Tuck (1993) 158–9). The political sensibilities of Grotius politicized not only Lucan's epic but also the poet himself, who was identified with an aristocratic senatorial class rather than an autocratic regime and as such the poem became as congenial to the Dutch regents as it would be to the Venetian senators to whom Campani was to dedicate his Italian translation in 1640 (see Heller (1999) 88–90 on the politics of the latter).

Lucan in Dutch

Amidst all this political turmoil Lucan left the secluded chambers of the academic world and entered the chambers of commerce. The Dutch translator of Lucan, Hendrik Storm, was *advocaat-fiscaal* (an office comparable to that of public prosecutor) with the Amsterdam admiralty and as such probably sympathetic to the Remonstrant perspective (Smit (1975) 332–63 is the only thorough treatment of this translation; Storm (1617), (1620)). The Latin edition on which the translation is based most probably is that of Grotius: the publication of the Grotius edition might in fact have triggered Storm's efforts. To a remarkable degree both share front matter: a life of Lucan, assembled from Tacitus' limited discussion in *Annals* 15 and 16 and Statius' much more favorable views of the poet (*Siluae* 2.7). The preliminaries are rounded off, in the translation as in the edition, by the description of the civil war available in Florus' *Epitome* (4.2 = 2.13). The first six books appeared separately in 1617, the year of the Sharp Resolution. This decree was passed at the initiative of van Oldenbarnevelt attempting to quench the civil unrest that had sprung from the religious disagreements. As it gave local authorities the power to raise troops, the Sharp Resolution presented a threat to Prince Maurits as the military leader of the Republic (Van Dam (2001) 23) and thus it only helped to polarize the situation further. By August 1618 both van Oldenbarnevelt and Grotius were arrested. In the wake of their arrest the so-called Synod of Dort convened (November 1618). Within less than a year, van Oldenbarnevelt was put to death. Grotius was sentenced to lifelong imprisonment in Loevenstein castle (from which he famously escaped in 1621). No wonder that in the 1617 edition of Storm's translation the text was primarily presented as a politico-moral lesson. The translator tells us in his foreword that he never planned to publish the text:

> I only worked on the translation to exercise my abilities in a domain that I had almost completely neglected. It was a test to try and get this author, who is not one of the easiest, to speak our language without resorting to foreign words. Therefore I never meant to translate the complete work, but only so much as I liked. (Storm (1617) f *3, r°)

Storm stopped a little over halfway through the work, and writes that he did not consider a publication of the results at all even though "Lucan's subject is not useless in these times, in order to avoid evil, and as a warning against the troubles that are caused by private passions." It would seem that the friends who persuaded him to publish an incomplete and rough translation in need of thorough revision (Storm, (1617) f *3, v°) felt that the danger that political and religious tensions in the Netherlands would turn into a true civil war was growing by the day and so the work best be published immediately, as a public warning.

While tensions did not lessen, Storm continued to work on his translation, apparently goaded on by the enthusiastic response to the first part. The full translation, published by Michiel Colijn, appeared in April 1620, shortly after van Oldenbarnevelt's decapitation. Civil war had become less of a danger, but the growing power of Maurits generated concern of another sort: the imminent loss of liberty by the rise of one-man-rule (see Israel (1998) 449–57, 474–7 for historical background). Within this context, Storm had to proceed with caution. The foreword was partially rewritten, and now stressed the need for discretion. He did not want the reading public to think that he had published the complete translation as a sort of political pamphlet lamenting the loss of liberty: rather, he hoped that readers would use their critical abilities when reading this text and not take Lucan's version as the absolute truth. Yet the accompanying poems by the most important poets from Amsterdam of his day – Hooft, Vondel, Coster – together with lesser known ones such as Van Wassenaer and an anonymous "Leerende Ick" (Instructing Self) do in fact combine into a pamphlet defending liberty and warning against the danger of Maurits' growing power and influence. The politics involved in this are rather complex (Crum (1980)): religious differences, economic interests, and sheer power-politics all coalesce. We have, for example, the poem by Nicolaes Van Wassenaer, a Latin teacher turned medical doctor and journalistic historian. His poem stresses the importance of Dame Fortune in Lucan's work and thus predicts a speedy downfall for haughty tyrants. Van Wassenaer's colleague Samuel Coster was a strong proponent of translations into Dutch, and joint founder of the *Nederduytsche Academie* in 1617, aimed at the promotion of critical thinking and humanistic science in Dutch rather than Latin. His poem in the Storm volume focuses on the pioneering and rewarding character of Storm's translational effort, but also showcases one of the political ideas that Lucan probes: might is right, but right is not necessarily justified. Vondel, who was to become the leading poet of the age, provided a sonnet for the Storm edition of 1620, *Op den Burgherkrijgh der Roomeren* ("On the Civil War of the Romans"), which can almost be read as a metaphor, using Roman events to comment on the evolution of the Dutch Revolt. The poem by P. C. Hooft, finally, likewise highlighted the theme of liberty, ingeniously using Lucan's most powerful image for Pompey, that of a majestic yet weak tree, as a symbol for the Dutch Republic.

By 1625 Maurits was dead and the Netherlands had entered a new phase. Storm's translation thus failed to maintain its appeal, while simultaneously Lucan lost his relevance as a metaphor for the contemporary political situation. Ten years later, however, Constantijn Huygens tried his hand at translating Lucan too with results far superior to those of Storm. Huygens' metrical version of the speech of Vulteius, *Bellum Civile* 4.476–520 (dated to 1632), neatly illustrates the radical change in approaches to translation: Huygens strives for a line-by-line translation, matching Lucan's narrative and syntactical rhythm very precisely, in contrast to Storm's practice of expanding half-lines into complete couplets which at times doubles or even triples the space Lucan (and Huygens) need.

Despite Storm's failure to live up to contemporary literary standards, it is clear that Lucan's appeal lingered. P. C. Hooft took over elements from the *Pharsalia* in his play *Baeto* (1617) and had already used Lucan's Erichto in the magic scene from the fourth act of his 1614 *Theseus en Ariadne* (in addition to Seneca's and Ovid's Medea). The Thessalian witch is also a prominent subtext for the thespian magic in *Geeraerdt van Velsen* (1613, lines 859–982). It does not come as a surprise to find Hooft confessing his

love for Lucan in a letter to Constantijn Huygens (Van Tricht (1976) 476, letter 199), perceptively connecting Lucan, Juvenal, and D'Aubigné. Huygens not only translated passages from Lucan but also wrote a Latin poem in praise of the poet featuring the ghost of his wife Polla (dated 1633 and published in 1644). Moreover, during this period many longer poems were written which experimented with epic forms, the most prominent of them by Vondel, who, as we know from contemporary sources, had translated at least some books of the *Pharsalia* into prose in order to study the poetical technique of the work (Brandt (1682) 40). None of these efforts qualify as epic proper. Lyric outpourings amidst narrative episodes, however, showcase the personal commitment of the poets, and provide a striking Lucanic resonance, and so does the rhetorical conception of poetical genres.

Lambert van den Bos, a poet from the next generation, brought out his first efforts at writing epic poetry in 1646 and 1647 (the first epics published in Dutch). *Triodon* (Van den Bos (1647)) comprised a translation of the first six books of Statius' *Thebaid*, and two historical epic poems of his own on the rise of a soon-to-be-established state (the peace of Münster was only a year away): the *Belgias* (on William of Orange's war with the Spanish); and the *Mauritias* (on the battle of Nieuwpoort); on these epic poems, see Smit (1975) 445–528; Van Gemert (2006). A year later he published his most ambitious work, *Batavias of de Bataafse Aeneas*, an attempt at creating a Dutch *Aeneid* (Van den Bos, 1648). In these works he sometimes employs the supernatural apparatus inherited from ancient epic, then again decides to follow Lucan's lead and abandon it. He adheres to Virgil's model, yet he introduces many elements from romance epic and novellas (which he knew well as he translated many of them from Spanish), and comments on the action much like Lucan's narrator. Van den Bos showcases a contemporary solution to the difficulty of writing historical or mythical epic poetry though, alas, his talents were not entirely up to the task.

The experimentation and generic crossbreeding that characterized much of the mid-seventeenth century epic poetry across Europe found their way into the Lucan-translation of Georges de Brébeuf, which premiered as a serial publication in 1654–5 (Brébeuf (1654); Guellouz (2004); Ternaux (2000) 114–19). De Brébeuf's work has been called "more Lucanian than Lucan" (*Lucano Lucanior*) and indeed in his translation he manages to be even more emphatic than Lucan: he selects those aspects of the text he wants to highlight and then proceeds to develop them with great skill. This of course means that he drops many elements from Lucan's text, but the ones that he chooses to retain are often handled with appealing dexterity (the technique is well analyzed by Mildonian (1995) 46–50). He also makes many additions to Lucan's text. One of the more brilliant interventions is a novelistic insertion into the Erictho scene featuring necromancy in book 6. It is a love story between the revived corpse and his girlfriend who is outraged that he is trying to leave her without notice. To make the situation even more distressing, Sextus Pompey turns out to be the girl's secret suitor and admirer.

Lucan's Challenge

The success of De Brébeuf in bringing Lucan up to date is brought out by the *Histoire poétique de la guerre nouvellement déclarée entre les anciens et les modernes* ("Poetic history of the war recently declared between the ancients and the moderns") written by François de Callières (Callières, 1688), in which he depicts an open war between

ancient and modern poets. The latter are in dire straits as they do not have a leader of Homer's or Virgil's standing. De Brébeuf, however, comes up with a solution (Callières (1688) 46–8): Lucan has defected from the ancients' side and, although he is unable to speak French, he considers the quality of his translation to equal that of the original work. After much discussion a compromise is reached by making the Great Corneille general-in-command. In this work, a double dethronement takes place: dramatic poetry supplants epic and Corneille (an ardent Lucanist) beats the army of Virgil's admirers. The association of epic and tragedy in Lucan's epic, already part of Heinsius' appreciation of the poet in his *De Tragoediae Constitutione* (Heinsius (1611) 228), and further strengthened by the many tragedies using whole parts taken over from the epicist, proved to be of lasting importance, especially among French theorists. The idea survives well into the eighteenth century and finds its most eloquent exposition in the poetical theory of Marmontel (Zeller (2009) 268–71).

The difficulty of properly rendering Lucan's demanding, concentrated, and ambivalent Latin proved too much not only for amateurs such as Storm, but for most translators of the seventeenth century: important as they may be for the development of a so-called republican literary culture, their literary merits are mostly slight (Braden (2010) 184). For those with classicist leanings, moreover, trying to uphold the ideals of a Tasso or a Scaliger, engaging Lucan on their own grounds often proved a near-impossible task. The translation by Alberto Campani is a good example, produced by a member of the Accademia degli Incogniti and published during the heyday of the academy in 1640, with the printing house that was most intimately associated with the academy, Giacomo Sarzina's. The Accademia became one of the most important gathering points for Venetian patrician intellectuals. It was responsible for a large part of the Venetian publications during the critical period of the thirties and forties, seeing many works to print that were if not libertine in nature then at least defiant of Rome and its paladins (Infelise (1997)). The members of the Accademia were often non-conformists appreciative of equivocation and ambiguity but at the same time also actively engaged in Venetian politics as senators or councilors (Rosand (1991) 38–40). Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that in his foreword Campani, much like van Oudendorp, stresses Lucan's senatorial and republican views. The introductory material of Campani's translation included items that bring out the Janus-face of many renditions of Lucan: next to the ideological force of the poem, the poetical challenge has to be faced as well. Comparing Lucan to Virgil is part of tackling the latter problem (as it was for Jacques Le Paulmier de Grentemesnil's *Apologia*), but the translator also reflects on the choice of meter. He admits that he had planned to use the *ottava rima* but Lucan's text had defeated him, and he had to settle for the unexciting and ordinary *verso sciolto* so as not to become obscure and pretentiously artificial. He had to choose between offering the reader a pedestrian *Pharsalia* or finding himself stranded in the mannerist camp.

A rather similar trajectory can be constructed for the Spanish translator of Lucan, Juan de Jáuregui, who used the *Octava Real*, a rhyming meter of 11-syllable verses, and found himself (unwillingly?) embracing the mannerist poetics of Góngora. Indeed, Jáuregui's creative life seems to have been determined by a struggle between his classicist leanings, as evidenced in his masterful translation of Tasso's *Aminta* published in Rome in 1607 (with Estevan Paulino) and his polemical *Antídoto Contra la Pestilente Poesía de las Soledades* aimed at critiquing Góngora (1617, with a later revision) and his temptation

to submit to the mannerist style as exemplified by his lifelong obsession with Lucan. In 1899 the critic Jordan de Urríes even unambiguously distinguished between two poetical practices in Jáuregui's work: one that originated from his (apparently innate) good taste, and another that Urríes considered a perversion of that good taste, a heresy which he attributed not to the dominating presence of his lifelong rival, Góngora, but to that other poet from Cordoba, Lucan (Jordán de Urríes y Azara (1899) 77–107). However, the story is certainly not that simple (Matas Caballero (1995); Rico García (2001)). Parallel to his classicist publications, Jáuregui developed a more complicated relation with the new aesthetics, the external appearance of which was not considered to be a problem, but the lack of inner truth (Kluge, 2007). Within Jáuregui's oeuvre the Lucanian evolution can be followed from its first appearance in his collection of *Rimas* ("Rhymes"), which included a translation of the naval battle from Lucan's third book (Jáuregui (1618) 151–69), until the end of his life; he worked on his complete translation from the 1620s until 1640. During that period he changed his mind and delivered what amounts to a veritable recreation and amplification of Lucan's poem (Herrero Llorente (1964); Schlayer (1927) 88–91 discusses the major shift of direction between both versions), which bears every hallmark of Góngaresque poetics, completely in line with other *belles infidèles* – translations that attempt to improve and beautify their original – from this time (compare the Spanish Virgil translation discussed by Izquierdo Izquierdo (1994)). The final result is thus full of contorted language, Latinate expressions, obscure formulations, and other improper effects that his Venetian contemporary Campani had sought to avoid.

Lucan's epic had challenged classical notions of what an epic poem should look like in his own time, and perhaps even more so after the legislators of renaissance poetics had passed their decrees. Yet there it was, in all its grotesque splendor, defying these prefabricated notions. A strongly colored political reading could find a readership for this poem, by ignoring or bypassing the idiosyncratic poetics, a strategy that as we saw was still efficient enough for van Oudendorp to adopt it. For translators who tried to do justice to the strange fascination of this heretical epic and wrestled to render adequately the magic charm that it exuded, the *Bellum Civile* became a catalyst. By examining the different translational efforts, placing them in their own poetical, literary, cultural, political, and religious context, and taking into account the most important pan-European intellectual movements and evolutions in the seventeenth century we have detected common traits within this diverse landscape. So far it has certainly been an ambitious journey but one that harbors many hidden treasures.

FURTHER READING

The history of Lucan's reception remains to be written, but in the meantime, see Fischli (1944). Walde (2009) is an excellent collection of case studies spanning a wide range of subjects. Her article in the Neue Pauly Supplement offers a useful survey (Walde (2010)). With regard to Lucan's seventeenth-century reception the English situation is the most intensively studied: MacLean (1990), Burrow (1993), Shifflett (1998), Norbrook (1999), Cheney (2009), Hardie (2011), and Braund (2011) all have something important to say about Lucan's position and are the obvious starting points; see also important new results from Paleit (2008, 2010). Those who want an overview of the French engagement with Lucan can turn to Ternaux (2000), the best chapters

of which treat the creative reworking of Lucan's themes in French literature from the period (best supplemented with Méniel (2004)). The other national traditions lack modern overview articles, let alone comprehensive treatments, although interesting case studies are available, some of them even book-length: I have mentioned a few in the text. Besides Burrow's, the only book situating Lucan's reception in a transnational epic tradition is the stimulating study of David Quint (1993).

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CHAPTER 24

Haunted by Horror: The Ghost of Seneca in Renaissance Drama

Susanna Braund

Jasper Heywood's translations of Seneca's tragedies into English mark an important moment in the reception of Seneca. He started with *Troas* (what we know as *Troades*) in 1559 and continued with *Thyestes* in 1560 and *Hercules Furens* in 1561. This much is familiar. Less familiar is the substantial Preface to his *Thyestes* translation, in which he dreams that the ghost of Seneca appears to him, wearing a full-length "scarlet gowne," garlanded with laurel, and holding a book (Heywood (1560) 119–24). The ghost says he is returning (173–8):

> to seeke some one
> that might renew my name,
> And make me speake in straunger speeche
> and sette my works to sight,
> And skanne my verse in other tongue
> then I was woont to wright.

The ghost is searching for the young man who has already translated *Troades* – Jasper Heywood, of course. In this prologue Heywood wittily appropriates the archetypal Greco-Roman apparatus of inspiration, in which the Muses appear to the poet. The ghost offers to help Heywood overcome his diffidence, based on his youth and on his terrible experience with errors introduced by the printers (383–8). He opens the book he is carrying and this sends Heywood into raptures about its appearance, texture, and fragrance, for example, 483–6:

> Therwith me thought a savour sweete
> I felt, so fresshe that was,
> That bedds of purple vyoletts,
> and Roses farre did pas.

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The ghost explains that this book contains his tragedies, written down by the Muse Melpomene on Parnassus for "the Ladies . . . of Helicon" (509), who,

> When walkyng in theyr aleys sweete
> the flowres so fresshe they treade,
> And in the midst of them me place,
> my Tragedies to read. (511–14)

We then learn that the velvety parchment of Seneca's book is made from the skins of purple-skinned fawns who frolic with the Muses (515–42), that the ink used in the book is made from myrrh (543–74), and that the water for the ink comes from "a pleasant spryng, / That is of all the paradise, / the most delicious thyng" (640–42). This spring is in the shade of a high cedar tree where there stands a gorgeous banqueting room with an ivory turret in which are displayed portraits of the poets Homer, Ovid, Horace, Seneca ("not in the lowest place" 626), Virgil, Lucan, and Palingene (575–654). Because the book is produced by the Muses, it is perfectly accurate and will enable Heywood to correct faults introduced into Seneca's text by printers (655–66). The book aptly falls open at *Thyestes* and the ghost urges Heywood to make a start and then outlines the plot (695–98):

> Fyrst how the furye draue the spryght
> of Tantalus from hell
> To styrre the stryfe, I harde hym reade,
> and all expounde full well.

Given the frequent recent criticisms of Seneca's "Tragedy of Blood" (Eliot (1986) 78), Heywood's idyllic picture of the beautiful book, the pastoral setting and the gorgeous building, as well as his identification of the plot of *Thyestes* with "pleasant poetts tales" (Heywood (1560) 699), may seem surprising and might invite us to reassess hostile or condescending attitudes towards Seneca's tragedies.

Heywood clearly respects and admires Seneca. The description of the grove frequented by the Muses is a clever and knowing reversal of the origin of Seneca's ghosts, who offer grim descriptions of the Underworld as they emerge from its dark depths. Heywood's idyll persists for a long time but is disrupted when the god of sleep deserts him, leaving him cursing and crying. In disappointment and desperation, Heywood takes his cue from the opening of the *Thyestes* and invokes the Fury Megaera to "Enspyre my pen" (759). Immediately, he experiences the physical symptoms of the onset of the Fury and sits down to write (763–74), and so ends the Preface. Heywood has found a brilliant way of offering homage to Seneca: he depicts himself unable to write without the ghost's assistance, he turns on its head the *topos* of the ghost from hell by imagining a ghost who communes with the Muses in a paradisiacal Parnassus, he incorporates the theme of vengeance, since the perfect book which the ghost shows him will allow him to get his revenge on inadequate printers, and finally he uses the Senecan Fury from *Thyestes* to set his translation of *Thyestes* moving.

Heywood's conjuring of the ghost of Seneca is highly fitting because ghosts are one of the most salient features of Seneca's tragedies, along with horrible acts of revenge, cruel, megalomaniacal tyrant figures – and of course his crisply pointed rhetoric. All these elements exert significant influence on Renaissance tragedy. Given the constraints

of space and the abundance of fine scholarship on the influence and reception of Senecan tragedy (see the Further Reading section, below), I shall here focus primarily on vengeful ghosts and megalomaniacal tyrants. I will start with the plays of the Senecan corpus and then discuss some of the many cases that are, as it were, haunted by the ghost of Seneca – and by the tyrant Nero.

The two plays of Seneca concerned with the descendants of Tantalus, *Thyestes* and *Agamemnon*, both have ghosts who deliver the prologue and immediately introduce the theme of revenge. In addition, there are three other ghosts mentioned in the plays, though they do not appear on stage, and they too are associated with vengeance. As Medea prepares to slaughter her sons she sees a "wild throng of Furies" (*turba Furiarum impotens*, 958), including Megaera, and the ghost of her brother Absyrtus whom she had murdered as she fled Colchis with Jason, seeking vengeance (*frater est, poenas petit*, 964). As she kills her first son she says "With this sacrifice I placate your shade" (*uictima manes tuos / placamus ista*, 970–971; all translations from the Senecan corpus are those of Fitch (2002–4)). Act 2 of *Troades* opens with the Greek herald Talthybius reporting his terrifying vision of the enormous ghost of Achilles, still out for revenge on the Greeks who have slighted him (168–202). And in *Oedipus* Creon reports the speech of the ghost of Laius (626–58), raised by Tiresias' necromancy, the "unavenged father" (*pater inultus* 643) who promises to seek out his unnatural son, accompanied by the Fury, and to "overthrow the incestuous house and wipe out its lineage in unnatural warfare."

But it is the ghosts in *Agamemnon* and *Thyestes* that shape the ghosts of Renaissance revenge tragedy. *Agamemnon* opens with the arrival of Thyestes' ghost from the Underworld; he immediately shrinks away from the palace with its dining hall where he was tricked by his brother Atreus into feasting on his own children (1–11). He declares his wish to go back to the Underworld with all its eternal punishments for criminals (12–21), criminals including his grandfather Tantalus whose crimes he has surpassed by eating his own sons and fathering a child on his own daughter (22–36). He announces that today is the long-awaited day of payback: it will see the death of Agamemnon (son of his brother Atreus) at the hands of his own wife and with the help of Aegisthus, the son that Thyestes fathered on his own daughter (37–52): "Soon now the house will swim in blood answering blood" (44: *iam iam natabit sanguine alterno domus*). With that he withdraws.

Even more influential is the more elaborate opening of *Thyestes*, usually regarded as the later of the two plays. First we meet the ghost of Tantalus, grandfather of Atreus and Thyestes, being dragged away reluctantly from the Underworld where he faces eternal punishment for serving his son Pelops to the gods: somehow, he already knows that his forced return is because his descendants are about to "dare the undared" (20: *inausa audeat*), horrors that will make him innocent by comparison (1–23). We now discover that it is a Fury who is driving him forward, to "goad this unnatural house into vengeful rage" (24: *penates impios furiis age*). She says (25–32): "Let them compete in crime of every kind, and take turns to unsheathe the sword. Let there be no limit to their anger, no shame in it; let blind rage incite their minds, let the parents' frenzy last and the long-lived evil pass into the grandchildren. Let there be no space for anyone to loathe an old offence: let new ones always arise, and many within each one, and while crime is being punished, let it grow." The Fury's horrific prescription continues with a wish that

"heaven not be immune to your evil" (48–49: *non sit a uestris malis / immune caelum*) and she impatiently anticipates the cannibalistic banquet at which Atreus will serve up to his brother Thyestes' own children (54–62). The grim irony is that Tantalus, whose torment is to be tantalized by food and drink just out of reach, has been granted a day off from hunger for this feast (63–4). In revulsion the ghost tries to tear himself away and return to the Underworld (68–83), but the Fury will not let him go until he has roused his descendants into turmoil (83–6). In a memorable outburst, the ghost declares "My proper role is to suffer punishments, not to *be* a punishment!" (87–8: *me pati poenas decet, / non esse poenam!*) and, reckless of the consequences, he attempts to take a stand to "block the crime" (95: *stabo et arcebo scelus*). At that moment the Fury ratchets up her special effects and instills in the ghost a ravening hunger and blazing thirst so that he capitulates to her (96–100) and follows her orders to make his descendants "thirst for blood of their blood in turns" (102–3: *suum infensi inuicem / sitiant cruorem*). Only then is the ghost of Tantalus dismissed by the Fury (105–21).

One further ghost in the Senecan corpus makes a similar impact in the Renaissance – the ghost of Agrippina. This ghost appears in the middle of *Octavia*, the historical drama (*fabula praetexta*) whose text is transmitted with Seneca's tragedies in one of the two strands of the manuscript tradition and which therefore stands alongside the authentic plays, despite the strong likelihood of its dating from the Flavian period or later. (On *Octavia*, see Wilson (2003); Boyle (2008); Buckley in this volume.) *Octavia* is a Roman historical drama set in Nero's reign in the year AD 62. It dramatizes Nero's decision to divorce and exile his wife Octavia so that he can marry his lover Poppaea. The play depicts Nero as a megalomaniacal autocrat, modeled on Seneca's Atreus, intent on getting his own way against the advice of his tutor Seneca and in defiance of the people who rise up in support of Octavia. The centerpiece of the play is a lengthy debate between Seneca and Nero (435–592) in which two very different attitudes towards absolute power are on display. Immediately after Nero's exasperated repudiation of Seneca's advice (e.g., "Let me act in a way that Seneca disapproves" 589), the ghost of Nero's mother Agrippina appears on the empty stage, bursting out from the Underworld to bring "a Stygian torch . . . to herald this iniquitous wedding" (593–5). She instantly declares her revenging intent: with her "still unavenged shade" (599–600: *manibus . . . adhuc inultis*) hers is a "hand of vengeance" (596: *uindex manus*) that will turn the wedding into a funeral. After a brief indignant description of her death on Nero's instructions (600–13), she tells us, in a passage modeled on Medea's vision of her wronged brother, that she herself is "hounded" by the ghost of her husband, Claudius, who is seeking revenge for his own death (through Agrippina's machinations) and for that of his son Britannicus (through Nero's) (614–17). She promises Nero's death to her husband's ghost, adding a prediction freighted with the familiar Senecan list of eternal punishments (619–23): "The avenging Erinys is planning a worthy death for that unnatural tyrant: lashes, and shameful flight, and torments to surpass the thirst of Tantalus, Sisyphus' dreadful labour, the vulture of Tityos, and the wheel that spins Ixion's limbs." Closing with expressions of regret that "wild beasts had [not] ripped apart [her] womb" before Nero could be born to bring "everlasting shame and grief" on them both, she returns to the Underworld (632–45). *Octavia*, then, shares with *Thyestes* the ingredients that particularly appealed to Renaissance readers – a megalomaniacal tyrant and a vengeful ghost.

A brisk overview of the highlights of the Renaissance development of tragedy reveals how fundamental the Latin plays were. The tyrant figures in the Senecan corpus (Atreus and Nero in particular) clearly provided models for what can reasonably be called the first extant Renaissance tragedy, Albertino Mussato's neo-Latin *Ecerinis*, performed in Padua in 1315, depicting the megalomaniacal ambitions of the twelfth-century tyrannical ruler of Verona, Ezzelino da Romano (see Braden (1985) 99–107). The context for Mussato's endeavor is that after several centuries in which the tragedies were not known at all, Seneca came to light during the thirteenth century and around 1300 was edited by Nicholas Trevet, an Englishman working for an Italian patron, Cardinal Niccolò Albertini of Prato (Mayer (1994)). But Senecanism was not yet launched, nor after the next important venture, Gregorio Corrario's *Progne* (1429), a bloodthirsty neo-Latin play which combines Ovidian material with Senecan form and sensationalism (Braden (1985) 102). The *editio princeps* of the tragedies was published by Andreas Gallicus at Ferrara in 1474 and from the late fifteenth century on there are documented performances of Seneca's plays in Latin (and later in the vernaculars) in Italy and England on stages in public spaces and in schools, universities, the Inns of Court (law colleges in London), and the royal court, including Pomponius Laetus' presentation of *Hippolytus* in Rome in the 1480s, Westminster School's production of the same play in the 1540s, and performances of *Troades*, *Oedipus*, and *Medea* at Cambridge University in the decade from 1550 on. (On these phenomena, see Boas (1914), esp. 385–90, appendix 4, listing university plays in the Tudor period; Bradner (1956), (1957); Binns (1974); Smith (1978), (1988).)

And so it is in the mid-sixteenth century that Senecanism takes off. To appreciate the full significance of this phenomenon we must remind ourselves that for several centuries drama had been almost exclusively the preserve of religion in the form of cycles of biblical plays, dramatization of saints' lives, and morality plays in which personifications of virtues and vices struggled for possession of human souls. While there can be little doubt that the medieval forms of drama influenced Renaissance tragedy – for example, there were plenty of wicked tyrants, such as Herod and Pilate, in the biblical plays (see Bradner (1956) and Miola (1997) 68–121) and plenty of ghosts in the *De Casibus* tradition, named for the stories of tragic downfall initiated by Boccaccio in his *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium* (1360–74) which generated John Lydgate's *The Fall of Princes* (1431–39) and William Baldwin's *A Mirror for Magistrates* (1559 onwards) – it is clear that acquaintance with Latin drama promoted the secularization of drama during the sixteenth century and thus widened enormously the range of plot and character available to dramatists. We must also remember that this was a period in which Latin drama was much more prominent than Greek drama. (For different positions on the relative influence on Renaissance tragedy of native/vernacular traditions versus classical models, see, e.g., Hunter (1974) and Boyle (1997) 141–66.)

Consequently, "the history of every major national theater in the Renaissance does include an early phase, however short, of formal Senecan imitation" (Braden (1985) 105). Since this is well-trodden ground, there is no need to do more than mention a few of the most significant cases. In Italy, *Orbecche* (1541), which will be discussed below. In France, *Cléopatre Captive* (1552), seen as the starting point of French tragedy, by Etienne Jodelle, a member of the Pléaide, a group of poets and critics self-consciously reforming and developing French language and literature by appropriating material and forms

from the classics. In England examples include Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville's *Gorboduc* (1561), a highly Senecan play which unmistakably reprises *Octavia* in its opening scene (Wilson (2003) 2). Moreover, it is hard to separate *Gorboduc* from the interest evinced in the tragedies by the translators Jasper Heywood whose *Troas* (1559), *Thyestes* (1560), and *Hercules Furens* (1561) have already been mentioned, Alexander Neville, whose 1560 translation of *Oedipus* was published in 1563, Thomas Nuce whose *Octavia* was published in 1566, and John Studley who translated *Agamemnon*, *Medea*, and *Hercules Oetaeus* in 1566 and *Hippolytus* in 1567. The only Senecan play missing from this list is *Phoenissae*, which was translated as *Thebais* by Thomas Newton in 1581 to complete his edition of *Tenne Tragedies*, containing all the translations listed above. In France, Robert Garnier's *Hippolyte* (1573) opens with the ghost of Aegeus, father of Theseus, describing the horrors of the Underworld and foretelling awful things to come for the house of Theseus. Spanish tragedy of the late sixteenth century specialises in tyrants who inflict arbitrary violence, e.g. Hyarbas in Gabriel Lobo Laso de la Vega's *Honra de Dido Restaurada* (1587), Acoreo and Orodante in Lupercio Leonardo Argensola's *Alejandra* (1582 or soon before), Nino and Semiramis in Cristóbal de Virués' *La Gran Semiramis*, and Atila in his *Atila Furioso* (both published in 1609) and especially Rojas Zorrilla's *Lucrecia y Tarquino* (1635–48), based on the Italian tragedy *Il Tarquinio Superbo* by Virgilio Malvezzi (1632), which was translated into Spanish in 1635. (On Spanish tragedy, see Flecniakoska (1964) and MacCurdy (1964); Isar (1964) expresses scepticism about Senecan influence on Spanish drama and attributes the similarities – violence, horror, moral confusion – to Spain's political and economic situation at the end of the sixteenth century.) The Spanish plays abound in murders and suicides both on stage and narrated, and, in a clear reprise of Seneca's *Thyestes*, Acoreo in Argensola's *Alejandra* arranges the limbs, head, and heart of Lupercio on a table along with a vessel containing his blood, covers them with a cloth, and has his wife uncover the remains.

Seneca lies behind the sudden emergence of revenge tragedy in particular in Renaissance drama. This development persists for some time and generates plays including Thomas Kyd's *The First Part of Hieronimo* (1585–87) and *The Spanish Tragedy* (1585–92); William Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* (1594), *Richard III* (1594, itself based on earlier Latin and English plays), and *Hamlet* (1603); John Marston's *Antonio and Mellida* (1599–1600) and *Antonio's Revenge* (1601); George Chapman's *Bussy d'Ambois* (1604) and *The Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois* (1610); Ben Jonson's *Sejanus* (1603) and *Catiline* (1611); Cyril Tourneur's *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1607); and John Webster's *The White Devil* (1612) and *The Duchess of Malfi* (written 1612/13). Spanish revenge tragedies include plays called *Progne y Filomena* by Guillén de Castro (written 1608–12) and Rojas Zorrilla (1636), the latter's *Morir Pensando Matar* ("To die intending to kill," 1642), and *Los Encantos de Medea* (1645), along with a number of plays featuring Herod, including Pedro Caldéron de la Barca's *El Mayor Monstruo los Celos* ("Jealousy the greatest monster," 1637).

For the remainder of this essay I shall focus on a few of the revenging ghosts and tyrants in Renaissance tragedy that are inspired by the Senecan corpus and suggest some of the most important similarities and differences. The revenge ghost who delivers the prologue and sets the drama in motion is a particularly clear instance of Senecanism. The earliest example seems to be in Gregorio Corrario's *Progne*, written in Latin around

1429, in which the ghost of Diomedes rises from the Underworld to foretell to the house of Tereus the horrors to come, mentioning the "grim troops of Furies" (*dira Furiarum agmina*) and the tortures of Sisyphus, Ixion, and Tantalus, before being summoned back to hell by a Fury. More than a hundred years later, the Italian dramatist Giambattista Giraldi, also known as Cinzio or Cinthio, exploits Seneca's *Thyestes* extensively and competitively in his much-praised 1541 play *Orbecche*, adapted from one of his own stories. (Braden (1985) 115–24 has a fine discussion of the play.) Cinzio rivals Seneca in sensationalistic intra-family murders: the Persian king Sulmone takes revenge on his daughter Orbecche for betraying him with a secret marriage that undermines the state by killing her children in front of their father after cutting off his hands, then desecrating their corpses and finally offering Orbecche a gift on a silver platter that turns out to be her husband's head and her children's corpses. The play continues with Orbecche taking revenge on her father by stabbing him and concludes with her suicide. The influence of Seneca is particularly obvious in Cinzio's multiplication of the vengeful spirits that set the play in motion and in the way that Sulmone reprises Atreus in his desire to innovate horrors. In the first scene, a Christianized goddess Nemesis appears declaring that good and evil have their own rewards and that guilt can be passed down to descendants and punished later. She then summons the three Furies and commands them to inflict grief, torment, and death on Sulmone's court. The second scene features the ghost of Orbecche's mother Selina, murdered by Sulmone for incest with her son, arriving from the Underworld intent on her vendetta against her cruel husband and enraged that Nemesis has anticipated her in rousing the Furies. As Davis observes, "Cinzio has rearranged his Senecan material, reassigning roles, it seems, to accommodate Christian teaching, with Nemesis as representative of divine justice and Selina as agent for sheer revenge" (Davis (2003) 115–18, quoted 117). And the tyrannical Sulmone rouses himself to action in terms clearly appropriated from Seneca, when in Act 3 Scene 3 he says:

> Che temi, animo mio? che pur paventi?
> Accogli ogni tua forza a la vendetta,
> Et cosa fa sì inusitata, e nova,
> Che questa etade l'aborrisca e l'altra,
> Ch'avenir dee creder noi possa a pena.
> Questo giorno ci dà degna materia
> Di dimostrare il poter nostro al mondo.

> What are you afraid of, my soul? Why are you still fearful? Gather all your force for this vendetta, and do something so extraordinary and novel that this age will shudder at it and the next age to come will hardly believe it possible. This day offers us fitting material for displaying our power to the world. (Translation adapted from Braden (1985) 118–19)

Seneca's Atreus provides the framework for rousing oneself to unprecedented evil (see Buckley in this volume), e.g. *Thyestes* 176–8 and 192–5:

> ignaue, iners, eneruis et (quod maximum
> probrum tyranno rebus in summis reor)
> inulte . . .

age, anime, fac quod nulla posteritas probet,
sed nulla taceat. aliquod audendum est nefas
atrox, cruentum, tale quod frater meus
suum esse mallet.

Idle, inert, impotent, and (what I count the greatest reproach for a tyrant in high matters) unavenged . . . Come, my spirit, do what no future age will endorse, but none fail to talk about. I must dare some fierce, bloody outrage, such as my brother would have wished his own.

Robert Garnier, the leading French dramatist of the sixteenth century, likewise harnesses the apparatus of the classical Underworld to the Christian idea of the scourge of God, using a Fury alone, without a ghost. (On the fusion of pagan and biblical ideas in Garnier and others, see Hillman (2007), esp. 22–4.) Garnier opens his first tragedy, the 1568 Roman historical tragedy *Porcie*, set during the civil wars that raged after the assassination of Julius Caesar, with a splendid curse-prologue delivered by the Fury Mégère who rouses herself to action and then summons her sisters Tisiphone and Alecto to join her in unleashing discord (71, 75) and thus punishing Roman arrogance (82).

C'est trop, c'est trop duré, c'est trop acquis de gloire,
C'est trop continué sa premiere victoire:
Rome, il est ore temps que sur ton brave chef
Il tombe foudroyeur quelque extreme mechef. (89–92)

It is too much, too lasting, too much glory gained,
and her first victory is too long sustained:
Rome, it is now time that on your leader bold
some drastic mishap fall to strike him down. (Trans. S. Braund)

Strangely, the first Senecan ghost in Elizabethan drama (Charlton (1946) 157) does not appear in the Latin original but is a (not unjustified) invention. Jasper Heywood in his *Troas* of 1559, the earliest English translation of Seneca, explicitly augments the original play with "the spright of Achilles" who delivers the prologue to Act 2. This ghost is certainly a revenge-ghost, as the following excerpt (36–42), for example, shows:

The deepe Averne my rage may not sustayne,
Nor beare the angers of Achilles spright.
From Acheront I rent the spoyle in twayne,
And though the ground I grate agayne to sight:
Hell could not hide Achilles from the light,
Vengeance and bloud doth Orcus pit require,
To quench the furies of Achilles yre.

Heywood's immediate inspiration is the account by the Greek herald Talthybius of the terrifying appearance and angry speech of Achilles' ghost early in the scene (168–202). This reorganization of Seneca's material shifts the emphasis of the original by diverting

attention towards Achilles and away from the tomb of Hector, which is so important in the Latin play.

Heywood in his translation of *Thyestes* and John Studley, translator of *Agamemnon*, likewise adapt their material to contemporary interests in scenes added at the end of each play. Neither involves an added ghost; both emphasize the continuation of the cycle of revenge. While Seneca's *Agamemnon* ends with Cassandra getting the last word, a half-line in which she threatens Clytemnestra with madness to come (*ueniet et uobis furor*, 1012), Studley adds a speech by Agamemnon's herald Eurybates in which he regrets Clytemnestra's vengeful spirit, narrates Cassandra's courageous and cheerful death, describes Orestes' flight and Electra's imprisonment by her mother in a ghastly dungeon, and finally reassures the audience that Orestes

> shall revenge his fathers death,
> Depryve with swerd th'adulterour, and Mother both of breath.
> So after all these bloudy broyle, Greece never shall bee free:
> But bloud for bloud, and death by turnes, the after age shall see.

Seneca's *Thyestes* closes very rapidly with a brief exchange between Thyestes and Atreus in which Thyestes seems to capitulate to Atreus and leaves his vengeance to the gods:

THY: The gods of vengeance will come: my prayers consign you to them for punishment.
ATR: I consign you to your children for punishment.
(1110–12: *uindices aderunt dei: / his puniendum uota te tradunt mea. / Te puniendum liberis trado tuis.*)

But Heywood gives Thyestes the last word in a lengthy speech that has him asking why he has not already been destroyed for his crime, in a development of *Thyestes* 1006–21 that is informed by similar scenes when Hercules and Theseus invite annihilation (*Hercules Furens* 1202–18 and *Phaedra* 1201–12):

> Why gapste thou not? Why do you not O gates of hell unfolde?
> Why do yee thus thynfernall feendes, so long from hens withholde?
> Are you likewyse affrayde to see, and knowe so wretched wight,
> From whom the godds have wryde theyr lookes, and turned are to flight?
> O hatefull hed, whom heaven and hell, have shoonde and lefte alone,
> The Sunne, the starres, the light, the day, the Godds, the ghosts be gone.
> Yet turne agayne yee Skyes a whyle, ere quight ye goe fro mee,
> Take vengeance fyrst on him, whose faulte enforceth you to flee. (2781–96)

This is a nice twist: Heywood has his Thyestes abandoned even by ghosts, and he closes the play with Thyestes pursuing the gods, to consummate their vengeance on him.

Heywood's Thyestes is explicitly intent on receiving his deserved punishment. Similarly, Thomas Hughes' play *The Misfortunes of Arthur* closes in a manner not authorized by Seneca, but instead in a way that brings the cycle of vengeance to an end with a Christianized sense of closure. Acted at court for Elizabeth in 1587, Hughes' production

starts with a highly Senecan ghost, that of the murdered British duke Gorlois, vowing vengeance upon the descendants of his enemy Uther Pendragon (1–9):

> Since thus through channells blacke of Limbo lake,
> And deepe infernall floude of Stygian poole,
> The gastly Caron's boat transported backe
> Thy ghost from Pluto's pittes and glowning shade
> To former light, once lost by destnies doome,
> Where proude Pendragon, broylde with shamefull lust,
> Dispoylde thee erst of wife, of lande and life,
> Nowe, Gorlois, worke thy wish, cast here thy gaule,
> Glutte on revenge! thy wrath abhorrs delayes.

The depth of Senecan influence can be registered by the fact that Hughes might have deployed a ghost from the native medieval tradition in ballads and romances, but prefers the Senecan model (thus Moorman (1906) 90).

Then, as he turns back to the stage, the ghost sees arriving "one engine of my hate, / With moods and manners for my revenge," namely Arthur's wife Guenevora, who is concerned with how she might take revenge on the husband who abandoned her nine years earlier to wage wars abroad, leaving her and the kingdom in the care of Mordred, who has become her lover:

> O wrong content with no revenge: seeke out
> Undared plagues; teach Mordred how to rage:
> Attempt some bloodie, dreadfull, irkesome fact,
> And such as Mordred would were rather his.
> Why stayest? It must be done! let bridle goe:
> Frame out some trap beyonde all vulgar guile,
> Beyond Medeas wiles . . .
> Spare no revenge, b'it poyson, knyfe, or fire!

Guenevora clearly combines elements of Seneca's Clytemnestra (in her situation), his Medea (explicitly in this passage), and his Atreus (thanks to her desire to "seeke out / Undared plagues" which reprises *Thyestes* 20 (*inausa audeat*, quoted above) and 192–5 (quoted below)).

In a departure from the Senecan model, the ghost of Gorlois reappears at the end of the play to pronounce himself satisfied:

> Now, Gorlois, swage thy selfe. Pride hath his pay,
> Murther his price, adult'rie his desert,
> Treason his meede, disloyaltie his doome,
> Wrong hath his wreake, and guilt his guerdon beares!
> Not one abuse erst offered by thy foes,
> But since most sternely punisht, is now purg'd.

He then commands himself to "work no further plagues" and proceeds to pronounce a panegyric of Elizabeth, so that Britain can "bathe in endlesse weale" under the rule of Elizabeth, "that virtuous Virgo" whose reign will bring back the Golden Age. He finally retires to the Underworld, intent on causing no disruption to the current regime or its prosperity.

It is Kyd who in *The Spanish Tragedy* (1585–92) produces a brilliant adaptation of Senecan ghosts and revenge, by framing his play as a spectacle watched by the ghost of the murdered Don Andrea together with his companion, Revenge. Thus in the opening scene, Don Andrea identifies himself and narrates his arrival in the (classical) Underworld. Proserpina sends him back into the world along with Revenge, who informs him that he is about to witness his lover avenge his murder (90–91):

> Here sit we down to see the mystery,
> And serve for Chorus in this tragedy.

Accordingly, at the end of each act, Don Andrea reacts to the events he has seen, usually with impatient incomprehension, and Revenge urges him to wait and see. The final act concludes with a wonderful scene (Act 4 Scene 5) which begins with Don Andrea's ghost pronouncing his satisfaction with the events of the play, but indicating that he is set on further rewards for his friends and punishments for his enemies in the Underworld. He details the pleasing prospects for the afterlife of his friend Horatio, his love Bel-imperia, and Horatio's father Hieronimo, then asks for help from Revenge, who immediately offers (27–28):

> This hand shall hale them down to deepest hell,
> Where none but Furies, bugs and tortures dwell.

In a marvelous fusion of pagan and Christian ideas, Don Andrea assigns the villains to take on the perpetual tasks of the classical Underworld – those of Tityus, Ixion, Sisyphus, and so on – and commits one of them to

> be dragged through boiling Acheron,
> And there live, dying still in endless flames,
> Blaspheming gods and all their holy names. (42–44)

Suitably, Revenge has the last word (45–48):

> Then haste we down to meet thy friends and foes:
> To place thy friends in ease, the rest in woes.
> For here, though death hath end their misery,
> I'll there begin their endless tragedy.

As Hillman says (2007: 17) the ghost and the spirit of Revenge are "instruments for superimposing a pagan eschatology upon a play-world that is nominally Christian." The quotations from Seneca in the avenger Hieronimo's speech in Act 3 Scene 13 (discussed e.g. by Boyle (1997) 143–4) guarantee the pagan strand – they clearly come from the book of Seneca he is holding – but they are combined with a biblical allusion, since Hieronimo opens the speech (lines 1–3) by evoking *Romans* 12.19, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord":

> *Vindicta mihi!*
> Ay, heaven will be reveng'd of every ill,
> Nor will they suffer murder unrepaid.

Revenge's combination of "mystery" and "tragedy" at the end of the play's opening scene (90–91, quoted above) is explicitly programmatic of the way in which Kyd fuses native and imported dramatic traditions (Habicht (1964)).

The influence of Seneca upon Shakespeare has been appreciated – and debated – since T. S. Eliot's important essays published in 1927 (Eliot (1986)). The most salient plays from the perspective of revenge are the early *Titus Andronicus* (1594) and the later *Hamlet* (1603), although *Richard III* (1594) warrants mention as a re-handling of the Senecan tyrant figure. In *Shakespeare and Classical Tragedy: The Influence of Seneca* (1997), Robert Miola argues that "[d]irectly or indirectly, *Thyestes* lies behind the action of *Titus Andronicus*, a deep source of its energy and its aesthetic of violence" (for his excellent discussion, see Miola (1997) 13–32; quotation from 23). He suggests that Shakespeare takes the revenge theme and intensifies it by splitting the desire for vengeance between three characters, Tamora, Aaron, and Titus, and thus multiplying "the shock value" of that vengeance. While Atreus provides a model for both Aaron and Titus in different ways, Tamora takes the Fury that opens Seneca's play as her model when she impersonates Revenge to call on Titus in Act 5 Scene 2 (28–40):

> Know, thou sad man, I am not Tamora;
> She is thy enemy, and I thy friend:
> I am Revenge: sent from th' infernal kingdom,
> To ease the gnawing vulture of thy mind,
> By working wreakful vengeance on thy foes.
> Come down, and welcome me to this world's light;
> Confer with me of murder and of death:
> There's not a hollow cave or lurking-place,
> No vast obscurity or misty vale,
> Where bloody murder or detested rape
> Can couch for fear, but I will find them out;
> And in their ears tell them my dreadful name,
> Revenge, which makes the foul offender quake.

In *Hamlet*, we can see that Shakespeare has internalized the Senecan essentials even more thoroughly than in the earlier play. Again Miola's discussion (1997: 32–67) is fundamental. He writes (33):

> In *Hamlet* Shakespeare again moulds a revenge play from Senecan drama and other materials. Once again he recalls Seneca's depiction of extreme passion, his operatic, superbly playable rhetoric, his penchant for meditation, his concern with the supernatural, his focus on the Styx within the human soul. And once again Shakespeare struggles to transform the monomaniacal revenger of Senecan drama into a tragic hero who can develop in the course of the action and move pity as well as terror . . . . Seneca shapes *Hamlet*'s infrastructure, its internal logic and design, rather than its surface.

The "other materials" to which Miola refers included an earlier play (what Miola (1997) 33 calls "the lost *Ur-Hamlet*") complete with ghost to provide background and initiate the action. While the ghost of the Elder Hamlet is essentially modeled on the ghosts in Seneca's *Agamemnon* and *Thyestes*, Shakespeare has wrought an important change

by postponing his entry and by making him a silent ghost at first. It is not until Act 1 Scene 5 that he directs his son to "Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder," saying (lines 80–88):

> O, horrible! O, horrible! most horrible!
> If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not;
> Let not the royal bed of Denmark be
> A couch for luxury and damned incest.
> But, howsoever thou pursuest this act,
> Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive
> Against thy mother aught: leave her to heaven
> And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge,
> To prick and sting her.

In a nice balance of the pagan and Christian traditions (as with Cinzio, Garnier, and Hughes above), Hamlet's vengeance for his father's murder is specifically directed towards his uncle Claudius, while the ghost leaves Gertrude's punishment to heaven.

Ben Jonson's *Catiline* (1611) is another play that uses characteristic Senecan paraphernalia clearly appropriated from the ghost of Tantalus (*Thyestes* 87–9) to initiate the action, by employing the ghost of Sylla (the Roman dictator Sulla, infamous for his violent capture of Rome and savage proscriptions) to rouse Catiline to attempt a coup d'état (lines 1–5):

> Behold, I come, sent from the Stygian sound,
> As a dire vapour that had cleft the ground,
> To ingender with the night, and blast the day;
> Or like a pestilence that should display
> Infection through the world: which thus I do.

The ghost enters the breast of Catiline and urges him to build on previous crimes in terms reminiscent both of the Fury in *Thyestes* goading the ghost of Tantalus (*Thyestes* 23–51) and of Atreus himself seeking some novel outrage (*Thyestes* 192–204, and throughout the following dialogue with his henchman):

> Let long-hid seeds
> Of treason in thee, now shoot forth in deeds
> Ranker than horror; and thy former facts
> Not fall in mention, but to urge new acts.
> Conscience of them provoke thee on to more:
> Be still thy incests, murders, rapes before
> Thy sense . . .
> What all the several ills that visit earth,
> Brought forth by night with a sinister birth,
> Plagues, famine, fire, could not reach unto,
> The sword, nor surfeits; let thy fury do:
> Make all past, present, future ill thine own;
> And conquer all example in thy one.
> Nor let thy thought find any vacant time
> To hate an old, but still a fresher crime

> Drown the remembrance; let not mischief cease,
> But while it is in punishing increase:
> Conscience and care die in thee; and be free
> Not heaven itself from thy impiety.

In particular the lines

> Nor let thy thought find any vacant time
> To hate an old, but still a fresher crime
> Drown the remembrance

are a precise translation of *Thyestes* 29–30, *nec uacet cuiquam uetus / odisse crimen: semper oriatur nouum*, and the reference to crime spreading into heaven adapts *Thyestes* 48–49 (quoted above). Of course, it is not difficult to produce lists of passages from the Senecan corpus closely translated or adapted in Renaissance tragedy, but our concern is larger than that, namely that these dramatists follow Seneca in how they model their characters and in how they use ghosts to initiate the action and to create mood and expectations. Thus Jonson's Catiline is a thoroughly Senecan protagonist, as we see from his long rousing speeches to his conspirators in Act 1 (326–420) and in Act 3, for example 3.644–55:

> All else cut off
> As TARQVINE did the poppy heads; or mowers
> A field of thistles; or else, vp, as ploughes
> Doe barren lands; and strike together flints,
> And clods; th'vngratefull *Senate* and the people:
> Till no rage, gone before, or coming after,
> May weigh with yours, though horror leapt her selfe
> Into the scale; but, in your violent acts,
> The fall of torrents, and the noyse of tempests,
> The boyling of *Charybdis*, the seas wildnesse,
> The eating force of flames, and wings of winds,
> Be all out-wrought, by your transcendent furies.

Though Jonson has thoroughly assimilated his prose sources for the Catilinarian conspiracy, such as Cicero and Sallust, he has also clearly Senecanized his material, especially the ambitious would-be tyrant Catiline.

The Roman historical setting had a special appeal for the seventeenth-century French dramatists Pierre Corneille and Jean Racine, who are both heavily influenced by Seneca. Corneille's first venture in tragedy is an adaptation of Seneca's Medea (*Médée*, 1635), but he soon realized that his strength lay in historical dramas such as *Horace* (1640), *Cinna* (1640), *La Mort de Pompée* (1643), *Nicomède* (1651), *Sertorius* (1662), *Sophonisbe* (1663), *Othon* (1664), and *Attila* (1667), in which he develops highly Senecanized language and ideology (Wanke (1964)). Racine, probably responding to contemporary literary fashion, minimizes or even denies his debt to Seneca (Lapp (1964); Tobin (1971) 151–62), yet *La Thébaïde* (1664), despite his protestations, is inspired by Seneca's *Phoenissae* (Lapp (1955) 7–9), his *Andromaque* (1667) is a reprise of Seneca's *Troades*,

albeit with a different outcome – Andromache triumphant instead of crushed – and a different handling of Seneca's villainous Pyrrhus, and in his *Phèdre* (1677) the confession scene is lifted virtually word for word from Seneca's *Phaedra* (Lapp (1955) 170–79). More generally, Racine takes over from Seneca an interest in the effects of heredity, in the perversions and inversions of Nature (Tobin (1971)), and in the depiction of royal palaces as claustrophobic and sinister (Lapp (1955) 67–9). His *Britannicus* (1669), a drama designed to challenge Corneille on his own ground of politicized historical plays, is a blend of Tacitus' Neronian narrative and of the Senecan tragic corpus, in particular the pseudo-Senecan *Octavia*, which generates textual borrowings virtually throughout, not in any mechanical way but showing instead that Racine was deeply imbued with the Latin texts (Tobin (1971) 152–155).

In *Britannicus*, Racine builds the young Nero's character during the play as that of the formerly powerful Agrippina disintegrates. In the second preface (for its 1676 publication) he says of Nero that "c'est ici un monstre naissant" ("he is here in the process of becoming a monster"); that is, he is not a full Senecan tyrant yet, but "il a en lui les semences de tous ces crimes" ("he has in him the seeds of all these crimes"). Agrippina sees this clearly at the start, knowing of his plan to murder Britannicus (11–12, with translation by Cairncross (1967)):

> L'impatient Néron cesse de se contraindre;
> La de se faire aimer, il veut se faire craindre.
> (Unbridled Nero banishes constraint;
> Tired of respect, he wishes to be feared),

itself a nice play on the famous words of the tyrant Atreus by the Republican Latin tragedian Accius (Warmington (1936) 168) *oderint dum metuant*, "They can hate me so long as they fear me." Although *Britannicus* sees Nero's power triumphant by the end, Racine ensures that Christian morality is satisfied, partly by the horrible death of Nero's savage and unscrupulous henchman Narcissus and partly through Agrippina's prediction in Act 5 Scene 6: she foresees, now that he has so coldly shed his brother's blood and will go on to kill his mother too, a kind of divine retribution that will make Nero his own victim. This is a conceit appropriated from Juno at the start of Seneca's *Hercules Furens*, where she sees that the only match for her enemy Hercules is Hercules himself (*Hercules Furens* 84–122), for example "Has he conquered me? Then let him conquer himself too" (116: *me uicit? et se uincat*). It seems that Agrippina temporarily reclaims some of her former power when she savagely asserts (1681–93):

> Rome, ce ciel, ce jour que tu reçus de moi,
> Partout, à ce moment, m'offriront devant toi.
> Tes remords te suivront comme autant de furies;
> Tu croiras les calmer par d'autres barbaries;
> Ta fureur, s'irritant soi-même dans son cours,
> D'un sang toujours nouveau marquera tous tes jours.
> Mais j'espère qu'enfin le ciel, las de tes crimes,
> Ajoutera ta perte à tant d'autres victimes;
> Qu'après t'être couvert de leur sang et du mien,
> Tu te verras forcé de répandre le tien.

> These heavens, this Rome, this life you owe to me,
> Will rise unendingly to haunt your dreams.
> Like furies, your remorse will dog your steps;
> You'll think to calm them by some other crimes;
> Your frenzy, feeding on its violence,
> With bloodshed ever fresh will mark your days.
> But in the end I hope the outraged heavens
> Will add, to all your other victims, *you*;
> And, having wallowed in their blood and mine,
> You will yourself be forced to shed your own.

This focus on Nero and his tyrannification is by no means confined to French literature. Gordon Braden (1985: 108) asserts that "plays on Nero eventually surface in almost every language" and lists an anonymous English *Nero*, in Spanish Lope de Vega's *Roma Abrasada* (*c.* 1600), Matthew Gwinne's *Nero* (1603), Thomas May's *The Tragedy of Julia Agrippina* (1628), Tristan l'Hermite's *La mort de Sénèque* (1644–6) as well as Racine's *Britannicus*; in Italian, there is Monteverdi's *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* (1642), with its libretto by Busenello deeply indebted to the pseudo-Senecan *Octavia*, in particular in the central confrontation between Nerone and Seneca, a scene which is virtually a translation from the Latin play.

The ultimate Senecan play of the English Renaissance is arguably Matthew Gwinne's *Nero: A New Tragedy*, an ambitious neo-Latin drama dating from 1603. (For an appreciative discussion, see Binns (1974) 215–24. Text and translation are available on the website: http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/Nero/ thanks to Dana F. Sutton.) This sprawling play, covering the years 49–65 AD, races through Nero's rise to power and provides a lurid depiction of his tyrannical reign with the theme of revenge prominent and an abundance of ghosts throughout. The play starts (like Cinzio's *Orbecche* discussed above) with Nemesis announcing her arrival from the Underworld along with the three Furies, Alecto, Megaera, and Tisiphone, a chorus intent on bringing *caedem, ultionem, lachrymas, cladem, nefas* (3: "murder, revenge, weeping, slaughter, evil"). Act 1 opens with Claudius' wife Messalina as a revenge-ghost being hounded by the ghost of Silius, whose death she caused by marrying him. In a close adaptation from Seneca's Tantalus at *Thyestes* 86–7 (*me pati poenas decet, / non esse poenam* ("My proper role is to suffer punishments, not to *be* a punishment!" trans. Fitch)), she says *nos decet furias pati, / non esse furias* (68–69: "We ought to suffer the Furies, not *be* the Furies"). She declares that she is seeking revenge on Claudius through Agrippina and Nero. Each of the later acts starts with a more or less vengeful ghost, narrating past events and predicting future events: Act 2 with the ghost of the emperor Claudius foretelling the death of Britannicus, Act 3 with the ghost of Britannicus on his way to the Underworld, Act 4 with the ghost of Agrippina foretelling the murder of Octavia, and Act 5 with the ghost of Octavia. In addition, the ghost of Agrippina turns up to haunt Nero and Poppaea from time to time. One of Gwinne's supporters, John Sandsbury, in a prefatory poem addressed to the scholar Lipsius, proposes that Gwinne's play serves as a mature substitute for the puerile *Octavia* of the Senecan corpus and, borrowing a classical image of poetic inheritance, asserts that in Gwinne Seneca has finally found a fitting metempsychosis.

To conclude, Seneca's ghost indubitably haunts Renaissance drama. Sometimes the presence of Seneca is palpable and the source direct; sometimes Senecanism is mediated

through one of the European vernacular dramas to another; for example, one of the earliest Italian tragedies, Cinzio's *Orbecche* (1541), was popular throughout Europe and may be seen as preparing the ground for the subsequent efflorescence of interest in Senecan horror. And the reception of Seneca varies from nation to nation. In Italy the dramatists respond to Seneca's exploration of the passions and obsession with horror by producing plays rich in spectacle and melodrama. In Spain the dramatists seem to relish horrible deaths and to delight in the arbitrary violence of the "tirano rey." In France, Seneca's declamatory language, rich in *sententiae*, finds fertile ground in the tightly wrought rhyming alexandrines of Corneille and Racine, with a strong preference for the morality deliverable in plays based on biblical stories and Roman history. And in England, we find the richest blend of all. There can be no doubt that medieval traditions of representing evil, for example Last Judgment pageants of sins committed and punishments ahead, are successfully grafted onto classical stock. The English dramatists revel in Seneca's perverse violence and declamatory rhetoric and they proliferate his ghosts and his tyrants. (For discussion of the relative alignments of Italian, French, and English forms of Senecanism, see Charlton (1946); Boyle (1997) 142–3 takes a slightly different view.) The dramatists' awareness of these elements appropriated from the Senecan corpus is attested by these parodic lines, taken from the Induction to an anonymous play of 1599, *A Warning for Faire Women* (Share (1998) xvi–xvii):

> How some damn'd tyrant to obtain a crown
> Stabs, hangs, impoisons, smothers, cutteth throats:
> And then a Chorus, too, comes howling in
> And tells us of the worryings of a cat:
> Then, too, a filthy whining ghost,
> Lapt in some foul sheet, or a leather pilch,
> Comes screaming in like a pig half-stick'd,
> And cries, Vindicta! – Revenge, Revenge!

Parody, of course, is never fair, but it is always an acknowledgement of power and influence. Let us hope that that is good enough for the ghost of Seneca.

FURTHER READING

The influence and impact of Seneca's tragedies on European literature have been immense. During the Renaissance, his plays were translated and imitated in Italy, Spain, France, and England (Jacquot (1964), Lefèvre (1978), Braden (1985), Kerrigan (1996), Dionigi (1999); for bibliography, see Braund (2011)). The influence of the tragedies on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English drama especially has received substantial attention from critics. Although preceded by Cunliffe and Lucas, it was T. S. Eliot in his 1927 essays on Seneca who laid the groundwork for the rehabilitation of the tragedies by refusing to judge them by the standards of Greek tragedy and instead asking what the Elizabethans in general and Shakespeare in particular saw in the plays (Eliot (1986)). Charlton's 1946 study remains valuable; so too the articles by Herington (1966) and Rees (1969). The more recent studies of Braden, Boyle, and Miola are essential reading. Braden 1985 argues that Renaissance writers were attracted to the autarchic selfhood, Stoicism, and declamatory style they found in Seneca's tragedies. Part 2 of Boyle (1997:141–207) finds similarities between Senecan and Renaissance drama, attributable to the similar political and social contexts of Julio-Claudian

Rome and Elizabethan-Jacobean England. Miola 1997 demonstrates the profound influence of Seneca on Shakespeare and his contemporaries, organizing the discussion through the themes of revenge, tyranny, and *furor*. Share (1998) is a marvelous selection of translations and adaptations of Seneca in English down to the twentieth century. On revenge tragedy more generally, see Kerrigan (1996), with discussion of Seneca at 111–41; Guastella (2001: 155–233) studies the vendetta in Seneca and the Senecan tradition. Davis (2003: 81–133) has an excellent section on the reception of *Thyestes* in England, Italy, and France, down to the twentieth century, including the Belgian Hugo Claus' completion of Artaud's unfinished *Thyestes* (1966).

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CHAPTER 25

"Fantasies so Varied and Bizarre": The Domus Aurea, the Renaissance, and the "Grotesque"

Michael Squire

Tendrilled plants morphing into winged female Furies. Fantastic hippogriffs whose tails wagon-wheel into a mass of acanthus. Sprightly panthers perched like birds among delicate blooms. Figure 25.1 shows just one detail from a vaulted ceiling in Nero's Domus Aurea. The room is usually labeled the "Hall of Hector and Andromeda," after one of the pictures to the eastern side of the vault (as seen at the bottom of Figure 25.1). For anyone visiting this room in person, however, what is most striking is less the individual mythological panels than the crowded mass of framing friezes, coffers, and bands – each crammed with the blue and red infill of semi-ridiculous, semi-monstrous, figures-cum-patterns.

Other contributions in this volume have already touched upon the Domus Aurea within the context of the "Neronian age." Beste and von Hesberg have discussed what another scholar has labeled the "architectural revolution" of its brick-faced concrete arches (Ball 2003); Bergmann has reviewed some of the architecture's apparent eastern, Hellenistic, and monarchic associations; Lorenz, on the other hand, has mentioned the palace's semantic games with painted perspective, confinement, and theatrical space. As for decorative designs like those in Figure 25.1, numerous other classical archaeologists have related these back to earlier Augustan precedents at the end of the first century BC. "The birth of the grotesque ornament," writes Walter-Karydi "marks the birth of a 'critical form'; it is one of the phenomena that signal the point of departure between the Greek and the Roman, not in the ethnic sense, but rather in a morphological and epochal way" (Walter-Karydi (1990) 147, my translation; cf. Picard (1981), (1984); Perrin (1982b), (1987); Sauron (2000) esp. 226–8; Croisille (2005) 93–6; Platt (2009)).

My aim in this chapter is somewhat different. Taking our volume well beyond the historical "age of Nero," my concern will be with the *Nachleben* or "afterlife" of

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Figure 25.1 Detail of the vaulted ceiling in the "Hall of Hector and Andromache" (Room 129) of the Domus Aurea.

the Domus Aurea: to explore what its painted decoration came to mean when Nero's palace was first rediscovered towards the end of the fifteenth century. Because they were preserved underground, the rooms of the Domus Aurea were quickly dubbed "grottoes"; by extension, as we shall see, the painted murals and ceilings within them came to be called "grotesques." Not only did these Neronian images give rise to a new painterly genre in the fifteenth and sixteenth century (the so-called "Quattrocento" and "Cinquecento"), they also had an immense and immediate impact on Renaissance thinking. The question which this chapter poses is *why*: what was it about these so-called "grotesques" that so captivated the Renaissance cultural imagination?

Before we can begin answering this question, we have to unlearn much of what we take for granted about the "Neronian age" today. Unlike almost all modern discussions of the Domus Aurea (at least since the late nineteenth century), earlier viewers did not look to this material to reconstruct Neronian cultural history. Indeed, the widespread association of the so-called "grottoes" with Nero (or for that matter the Domus Aurea) came only much later: most sixteenth-century viewers and commentators vaguely identified these rooms with the "Baths" or "Palace" of the Emperor Titus. We also have to try and forget our standard talk of "Four Styles" of wall-painting, derived as it is from Mau's researches at Pompeii some four centuries after the Domus Aurea's rediscovery. Before the systematic excavations of the Vesuvian sites on the Bay of Naples, the ceilings and murals from Nero's palace constituted the prime extant example of *all* ancient painting,

not some final chapter in what Mau would come to term the ornamental (and hence "decadent," "unoriginal," and "inferior") "Fourth Style."

To explain the importance of the Domus Aurea and its imagery during the Renaissance, the chapter proceeds in four interrelated stages. I begin by summarizing when, where, and how Nero's palace came to be discovered in the late 1400s. I then proceed, second, to investigate the immediate reception in Rome (and indeed beyond). Third, I turn to the atelier of Raphael, and in particular Raphael's Loggia in the Vatican, in an attempt to unpack the visual, cultural, and intellectual thinking behind the widespread replication of this new decorative mode. A brief conclusion then ties these different threads together, relating the rediscovery of the Domus Aurea to much grander debates about iconicity and representation. As I hope to show, the importance of the grotesque lay in its (re-)negotiating of the boundaries between the figurable and the non-figurable: artists appropriated the imagery of the Domus Aurea to probe the very limits of visual representation itself.

"Breaking our Backbones on our Knees"

Exactly where and when the Domus Aurea was discovered remains something of a mystery (Dacos (1969) 4; Scholl (2004) 65–127). The approximate date seems to have been around 1480, during the papacy of Pope Sixtus IV (for a slightly earlier dating, see La Malfa (2000): esp. 269–70). The timing could not have been better. This was a period when the papal court at Rome was establishing itself as one of the most important sites of Italian artistic patronage (cf., e.g., Massimo (1986); Rowland (1998) esp. 105–6; Paoletti and Radke (2005) 289–312).

According to Giorgio Vasari, the Domus Aurea was discovered during the refurbishment of the Basilica di S. Pietro in Vincoli (to the south of what is now the Via Cavour). Vasari's *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* was first published in 1550, and then in revised and expanded form in 1568. In his most detailed description, Vasari tells how an artist named Giovanni da Udine was among the earliest fifteenth- and sixteenth-century visitors, exploring the "grottoes" with the great Raphael himself (II.577–8: text derived from Vasari (1984) 448, my translation; cf. Weege (1913) 137–8; Dacos (1969) 100–1; Scholl (2004) 80–3):

> Not long afterwards, when excavations were being made at S. Pietro in Vincoli among the ruins and remains of the Palace of Titus (in the hope of finding figures), a number of rooms were discovered. The rooms were completely buried under the ground and full of little grotesques [*grotteschine*] – small figures and scenes, with other ornaments of stucco in low relief. When Raphael was taken to see them, and Giovanni went along with him, they were struck with amazement, both the one and the other together: such was the freshness, beauty and excellence of those works [*freschezza, bellezza e bontà di quell'opere*]. It appeared to them an extraordinary thing that the works had been preserved for so long a time; in truth it was no great marvel, for the works had not been open or exposed to the air which is accustomed in time to consume all things because of the vicissitudes of the seasons. These grotesques [*grottesche*] – which were called "grotesques" from their having been discovered in the grottoes – were executed with so much design [*disegno*], with fantasies so varied and so bizarre [*sì varii e bizarri capricci*], with ornaments of delicate stucco divided by various fields of color, and with their little scenes so pleasing and beautiful; they entered so deeply into the heart and mind of Giovanni, that, having devoted himself to the study of them, he was not content to draw and copy them merely once or twice . . . .

We will return to Giovanni da Udine later. For now, it is worth noting how the site is here delineated: what we today know as the Domus Aurea was in the sixteenth century identified as "the ruins and remains of the Palace of Titus." Most early visitors do not seem to have associated these paintings and stucco works with Nero; indeed, popular tradition associated Nero's palace with other parts of the city – the Lateran or Quirinal hills, for example, or else the area around the Vatican (Harpham (1982) 23–4; Clarke (2003) 151, with further bibliography at 320, n. 104). There are occasional hints at a different topography: in a letter to Pope Leo X in 1519, Raphael talks about the reuse of the Domus Aurea within the Baths of Titus and subsequent buildings (Golzio (1936) 85); when he came to label his sketches of the rooms in the late 1530s, moreover, Francesco d'Olanda explicitly associated them with the Neronian house (*De Domo Aurea Neronis Apud Amphitheatrum*: cf. Dacos (1969) 9, n. 3; Iacopi (1999) 7–8; Price (2002) 13–15). Still, these references are the exception, not the rule. As Dacos concludes, "the Terme di Tito remained the general denomination until the end of the seventeenth century" (Dacos (1969) 9, my translation): most did not know – or else chose to ignore – the connection with Rome's most infamous emperor.

So what did early visitors actually see? Renaissance "tours" of the Domus Aurea must have been very different from the cozy strolls of the modern-day visit (Dacos (1969) 9–13; Ames-Lewis (2000) 128–31; Cohen (2003) 343–5). Because the site was completely buried under the ground, visitors were lowered in with ropes and pulleys. They then navigated their way through a labyrinth of interconnecting tunnels, often crawling on all fours. Most rooms seem to have been only partially cleared of debris: although visitors could see ceilings and barrel vaults, walls were generally obscured (which partly explains why the ceilings exerted much more artistic influence than the mural decoration). This debris was ancient, and takes us back to the re-use of the Domus Aurea in the immediate aftermath of Nero's demise. Embarrassed by the legacy of Nero's lavish palace, the emperor Trajan converted sections of the house into an artificial, cost-cutting substructure for the public baths inaugurated in AD 106 (Weege (1913) 135–6; Richardson (1992) 121, 397; Cassatella (1995); Segala and Sciortino (1999) 19–22). Ironically, the gesture served to protect this section of the house, rather like the volcanic ash and lava that preserved the Roman towns of Pompeii and Herculaneum: the frescoes "had not been open or exposed to the air," as Vasari notes.

Evidence for these fifteenth-century visits remain visible today. Many of the rounded openings used to lower visitors into the Domus Aurea from above can still be seen: witness, for example, the two pot-holes bored through the ceiling of Room 80 – quickly dubbed the "Volta Dorata," or "Golden Vault," on account of its lavish decoration (Figure 25.2).

After clearing enough earth to allow access, visitors could sometimes walk around or on top of the infill below. Still, the palace's original doorways remained inaccessible. In order to pass from one room to another, visitors had therefore to tunnel through the original Neronian walls – hence the additional passageways seen in the upper walls of Figure 25.2. Given the absence of natural light, torches were used to light the way, with flickering flames no doubt adding to the dramatic light-and-dark effect. Here is one of the earliest descriptions of the "cave-like, ruined grottoes" – an anonymous Italian poem in *Antiquarie Prospettiche Romane*, written by a Milanese artist shortly before

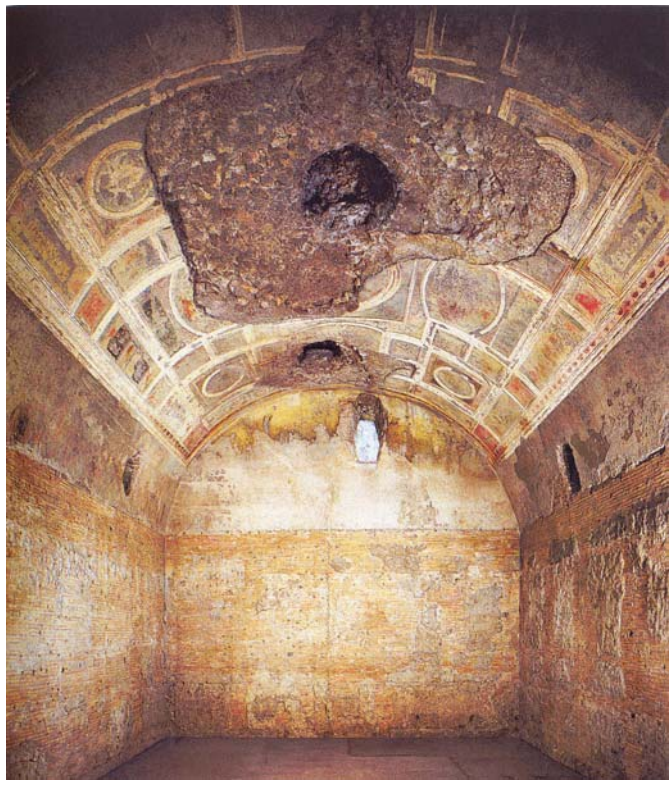

Figure 25.2 The "Room of the Golden Vault" (Room 80) in the Domus Aurea, as seen today.

1500 (strophes 125–9; for the Italian, see Dacos (1969) 9–10; cf. Schulz (1962) 47; Scholl (2004) 83–4):

> In every season the rooms are full of painters. Here summer seems cooler than winter . . . We crawl along the ground on our stomachs, armed with bread, ham, fruits and wine, looking more bizarre than the grotesques . . . Each person resembles a chimney-sweep, and our guide . . . shows us toads, frogs, barn-owls, civet-cats and bats, while we break our backbones on our knees.

Such expeditions must have been dark and dingy affairs, not to mention dirty ("each person resembles a chimney-sweep"). They could also last all day, interspersed with underground (as it were) *al fresco* picnics.

This late fifteenth-century poem also provides our earliest reference to the "grotesque" nomenclature (cf. Dacos (1969) 3–4, although the most detailed philological history is Knaak (1913)). Because the subterranean rooms appeared to be isolated "caves" or "grottoes" (*grotte*), their painted designs were labeled as things "of" or "pertaining to" such spaces: *grottesche*. We have already heard Vasari use the expression later in the sixteenth century; Benvenuto Cellini would be still more explicit about the derivation, explaining how "grotesques were named as such by moderns because they were found

in certain caverns of the earth in Rome, which in antiquity were rooms, ovens, studies, halls, and other things like this" (quoted by Dacos (1969) 3; cf. Cohen (2003) 345). The name subsequently came to define not only a decorative style, but also a dreamlike (and slightly nightmarish) world that at once beguiled and threatened:

> by the word *grottesco* the Renaissance . . . understood not only something playfully gay and carelessly fantastic, but also something ominous and sinister in the face of a world totally different from the familiar one – a world in which the realm of inanimate things is no longer separated from those of plants, animals, and human beings, and where the laws of statics, symmetry, and proportion are no longer valid. (Kayser (1981) 21; cf. Morel (1997) 21–35)

These cavernous "grotesques" might capture the "grandeur of the ancients [*grandezza degl'antichi*]," as another sixteenth-century source puts it. But there was nonetheless danger in this strange, pagan Underworld: one had to be sure to visit them in good company (cf. Dacos (2008) 330, n. 15).

Although it is impossible to chart exact routes through the Domus Aurea, many early visitors commemorated their visit by inscribing their names into the upper walls and ceilings. Wanton vandalism it may be (at least to our eyes), but such graffiti provide a useful inventory of visitors (Weege (1913) 141–51; Dacos (1966); (1969) 139–60). Dozens of signatures survive, amounting to a sort of "who's who" of the Renaissance: on the ceiling of the cryptoporticus (Room 70), for example, we find the name of "Giovanni da Udine, Friulian" himself, in line with the story told by Vasari (cf. Dacos (1969) 148, (2008) 33). Some graffiti also include dates, testifying to the almost immediate popularity of the site (the earliest reference seems to be to the year 1493: cf. Schulz (1962) 47, with n. 34). What is more, these scribbles indicate which rooms were accessible – and indeed most popular – at which times: as Dacos has shown, the most frequented rooms included the "Vault of the Owls" (Room 29), "Golden Vault" (80), "Yellow Vault" (31), and the "Hall of Hector and Andromache" (also known as the "Hall of the Stuccoes" (129); for a plan of the Domus Aurea showing the rooms known in the Renaissance, see Dacos (1969) fig. 1).

From our perspective in the twenty-first century, it can be difficult to understand all the fuss. If the marble and gilded facings that originally gave the house its name had been stripped in antiquity, today's site has little of the vibrant and colorful "freshness" so celebrated by the likes of Vasari. What is more, significant sections of the house have collapsed since the Renaissance, weakened by unsystematic excavations, the *ad hoc* boring of tunnels, and above all the problems of damp and moisture. To reconstruct the original compositions and colors seen in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries – the celebrated shades of red, yellow, blue, and gold – we have to rely on earlier copies and reproductions, some surviving from the Renaissance itself (most notably in the so-called Codex Escurialensis: see Egger (1906), along with Dacos (1969) 61–2; Benzi (2000); Zamperini (2008) 98), others from the eighteenth century (most important are the prints by Nicolas Ponce: see Ponce (1786), reprinted in Ponce (1805), with discussion in Perrin (1982a); compare also Mirri and Carletti (1776); Weege (1913) 151–3 provides an inventory of "Skizzenbücher" between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries). Still, these reconstructions make for a poor substitute. Despite all the scholarly attempts to do so, it is remarkably difficult to reconstruct the precise forms that Renaissance artists encountered in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Seeing Beyond the Vanishing Point

The Domus Aurea frescoes were not the only ancient paintings known at this time. Fifteenth-century artists had already exploited other sites – not only late-antique catacombs, but also the painted ceilings of the Colosseum, the paintings from Hadrian's villa at Tivoli, and certain Campanian sites around Baiae (Dacos (1969) 41–54; cf. Vos (1985)). In the context of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, though, there could be no doubt: the "Domus Aurea constituted . . . the richest decorative ensemble that artists had known and studied" (Dacos (1969) 50, my translation).

So what did the Domus Aurea's "grotesques" offer artists that other monuments did not? Two points seem particularly important, relating first to the paintings' vivid use of color, and second to their formal design and composition. Countless commentators – including Vasari, in the passage cited above – emphasized the colorful vibrancy (*freschezza*) of the paintings, preserved in full technicolor splendor. For artists used to making do with the (mostly) off-grey hues of Graeco-Roman sculpture, the paintings offered a new polychrome perspective. If the "Renaissance" was to give "rebirth" to the prized aesthetic standards of antiquity, it would have to rethink its palette.

The second feature was the recourse to pictorial fantasy. What fascinated early visitors about these designs were their ornamental frames and miniaturist details. Unlike most modern viewers, Renaissance audiences do not appear to have homed in on the framed mythological paintings. Indeed, what strikes me as most remarkable about the discovery of the Domus Aurea is how little impact the paneled *pinax* vignettes exerted in comparison to the framing surrounds: why, we might ask, were more Renaissance paintings not inspired by the iconography of the large-scale panels – the paintings from the "Hall of Hector and Andromache" (Figure 25.1), for example, known instead as the "Volta degli Stucchi" ("Stucco Vault": Dacos (1969) 13–20; cf. Weege (1913) 200–39)?

To understand this fascination with the fantastic, we have to think back to the art-historical context of the late fifteenth century. As reflected in its very nomenclature, the Renaissance was founded upon the deliberate revival of all things Greek and Roman. This is where the Domus Aurea decoration came into its own. Here, after all, were paintings of recognized "antiquity." And yet the form and arrangement of these images seemed to contradict almost everything that had been previously assumed about "ancient" art. Yes, these images did subscribe to a classical proportion of sorts: there was *symmetria* and *ordo* in their collective configuration, true to the all-important prescriptions of ancient writers like Vitruvius (observe how the framed boxes of Figure 25.1 add up to a masterful game of "Tetris," for example, each frame packed in against another). And yet the sheer mass of fantastic figures – the unabashed eruption of enticing, puzzling, mind-bending, frightening *capricii* – flew in the face of *arte all'antica* as previously conceived. Grotesques, as one scholar nicely puts it, were "classical in origin," but "anti-classical in substance": "contemporaries . . . were shocked by the nonchalance, or even the complacency, with which unlimited credence was given to unreal images, bizarre forms that had never been seen in nature" (Zamperini (2008) 122, 6).

To say that the grotesques of the Domus Aurea precipitated a "crisis" in Renaissance thinking would be to put things negatively. Better, perhaps, we might associate the

grotesque with what one scholar has labeled a "para-aesthetic" (Scholl (2004) 15–64). Here was a "circus of formidable but uncertain significance" (Harpham (1982) 25). Precisely because of their strangeness, these images also raised questions about how we should *look at* and *think about* the visual realm: they interrogated what pictures were – the "ontology" of the image. With this in mind, part of the appeal of the grotesque lay in its more immediate stylistic retrospection. The grotesque embodied a system of visual adornment that, although in one sense new and cutting-edge, seemed simultaneously to look back to (what we call) "medieval" and "Gothic" art. The paintings demonstrated a concern not only with pattern and calligraphy, but also with the non-mimetic elements of pictorial make-believe (what one scholar has called "images on the edge": Camille (1992); cf. also Baltrušaitis (1973)).

If the Domus Aurea imagery bridged the gap between the figurative and the non-figurative, it also offered an antidote to the Renaissance artistic concern with replicating reality. In contrast to the standard fifteenth-century rhetoric of collapsing art and nature – think of Leon Battista Alberti's elaborate treatises on linear perspective, for example, or else Leonardo da Vinci's famous drawing of "Vitruvian Man" (Squire (2011) 11–15) – the grotesque resurrected something wholly more abstract and capricious. Wherever our eye falls within the Domus Aurea decoration, our attention is constantly enticed away again: the delight of these pictures lay as much in the act of looking as in the gesture of being deceived. It is here that the real significance of the Domus Aurea lay. For where Renaissance commentators had looked to ancient writers to construct elaborate theories of proportion, illusion, and *disegno* ("design" in both a technical and intellectual sense), the Domus Aurea seemed to prioritize artistic innovation over and above the reproduction of realistic appearances. This imagery was understood to probe the other side of the "vanishing point," bringing viewers face to face with the marginal designs (and desires) of the creative imagination. "With the grotesque, representation was simultaneously invoked and discredited": "grotesque forms . . . would stand as a reminder of the inability of the artist to rival the inexhaustible abundance and ingenuity of nature, or of God" (Harpham (1982) 178, 177). Here was the *antithesis* of illusionistic verisimilitude (cf. Morel (1997), esp. 6, 87–99; compare also Chastel (1988) esp. 25).

Experimentation was at first cautious (Dacos (1969) 57–77; Zamperini (2008) 93–106). The earliest engagements with Domus Aurea imagery tended to incorporate isolated details, keeping colors to a sculptural minimum; free-standing grotesque figures were also generally avoided, or else relegated to realistic-looking pilasters, archways, or reliefs within the make-believe painting. Because verisimilitude remained a foremost concern, late fifteenth-century artists alluded to the new archaeological discoveries without breaking the impression of illusionism: Filippino Lippi's Strozzi Chapel in Santa Maria Novella in Florence, for instance, projected the grotesque designs to the pilastered sidelines of his *trompe-l'oeil* composition; Pinturicchio's Basso della Rovere Chapel at Santa Maria del Popolo in Rome, on the other hand, turned the grotesque into symmetrical gold fancies, while simultaneously resorting to them in the framed decoration of the building behind the Virgin Mary (Figure 25.3).

Slowly but surely, confidence began to grow during the ensuing decades. By the beginning of the sixteenth century, we find whole ceilings structured after the orthogonal arrangements of the Domus Aurea's Golden Vault – as in Pinturicchio's Libreria

Figure 25.3 Bernardino di Betto ("Pinturicchio"), detail from the Basso della Rovere Chapel in Rome's Santa Maria del Popolo Church, *c.* 1500.

Piccolomini in the cathedral at Siena (*c.* 1501–6), with its series of multi-colored triangles propping up an orthogonal, checkerboard ceiling (Dacos (1969) 66–9). We happen to know the wording behind this particular commission, which provides another early reference to the new "grotesque" terminology (this time fixed to 1502): if this room was to depict "fantasies, colors and partitions that shall be judged most graceful, beautiful and vivid," these "fantasies" were also to comprise "fine, delicate and richly charged colors, as part of the decoration and design of what are now called grotesques [*che hoggi chiamano grottesche*], with the compartments varied in such a way that they shall be deemed most beautiful and graceful" (cf. Schulz (1962) 48; Dacos (1969) 68–9; Barasch (1971) 20–1).

As motifs and compositional schemes became more familiar, painters played more overtly with the conceptual stakes. Domenico Ghirlandaio, Filippino Lippi, Luca Signorelli, Pietro Perugino: these are among the earliest artists who exploited the grotesque to rethink the literal and metaphorical boundaries of the painted surface – the

Figure 25.4 Giovanni Antonio Bazzi ("Il Sodoma"), detail from the Convent of Sant'Anna in Camprena near Pienza, *c.* 1502–4.

relationship not only between centre and periphery, but also between reality and fiction. One pertinent example comes among the frescoes designed by Giovanni Antonio Bazzi ("Il Sodoma") for the refectory of the Convent of Sant'Anna in Camprena (near Pienza in northern Tuscany) (Figure 25.4; for some basic bibliography, see Dacos (1969) 87–9). Illusionism and replication are very much the name of the game here: the two dimensions of the mural surface aspire to the three dimensions of real-life architectural modeling. In this quest at once to deconstruct and reinforce the rhetoric of perspective, the grotesque takes on a critical role. The *grisaill*e sketch is monotone, whereas the grotesques to its right are painted an ochre-brown against a yellow background. This juxtaposition consequently bestows these bizarre and puzzling squiggles with a paradoxical sort of representational status: the *grisaille* might be illusionistic (observe the receding arch to the left), so that, true to Alberti's analyses earlier in the fifteenth century, the painting serves as a sort of "window" onto the world; at the same time, though, the monochrome distinguishes this sort of pseudo-sculptural relief from the multi-color but resolutely two-dimensional space of the grotesques. Then there is the puzzling winged putto entangled in their midst: this figure is rendered in a full palette of colors, but this time in receding, three-dimensional depth. Just where are the limits between believable reality and manufactured fabrication?

At Camprena, such questions frame the encircled enigma of Saint Bernard himself, painted in the middle of the make-believe windows. Figure 25.4 shows just one of several *trompe-l'oeil* portholes through which the saint appears; in this particular case, he is shown resting his hat on *our* side of the mural divide, further playing with the multiple dimensions of the painted surface. In every sense, the grotesques mediate between these different ontological registers. Although they might seem peripheral, the grotesques become central to the frame-games of artistic illusion: by interrogating the boundaries between surround and surrounded, they pose questions about the relations between reality and two-dimensional replication. "Looking at ourselves looking at the

grotesque, we can observe our own projections, catching ourselves, as it were, in the act of perception'' (Harpham (1982) 43).

My favorite example of such visual play is to be found in Orvieto Cathedral: namely, Luca Signorelli's frescos for the Capella Nuova between 1499 and 1504 (Kayser (1981) 21; Dacos (1969) 72–4; Harpham (1982) 39–41; Riess (1995) esp. 23–50; Morel (1997) 40; Scholl (2004) 71–2). What is so extraordinary about Signorelli's recourse to the grotesque is his wrestling with the theological stakes: the artist looks to the imagery of the Domus Aurea and re-appropriates it within frescoes that explore not only the limits of visual representation, but also the underlying moral, ethical, and religious stakes. In the chapel's upper murals we see a series of apocalyptic scenes, climaxing in a depiction of the Antichrist whispering into Christ's ear. Below, closer to the actual viewer who looks up at the paintings, is a series of paneled grotesques, most of them enclosing an authorial celebrity in a central roundel (Figure 25.5). Six of the figures are identifiable, portraying Cicero, Ovid, Virgil, Statius, Lucan, and Dante; the figure in the panel reproduced as Figure 25.5 is somewhat harder to identify, although some modern critics have suggested the Greek philosopher Empedocles (cf. Riess (1995) 31–2).

As with Il Sodoma's frescoes at Camprena, the writhing grotesques within the make-believe frames at Orvieto oscillate backwards and forwards between autonomous beings and fantastic fabrications. The painted surface is at once a flat and artificial construction (adorned with a swarming team of medieval-looking, plant–man hybrids), and an opening into a sphere beyond – a three-dimensional world from which the painted onlooker himself emerges, elbowing himself into the real space that the viewer occupies (Harpham (1982) 39–41). In this connection, it is worth noting how the gaze of the man in Figure 25.5 is as ambiguous as the figures that surround him. Is his gaze fixed on the apocalyptic scenes above this collective panel? Or is he marveling at the equally grotesque apocalyptic scenes that are themselves depicted above these? Are these phantasmagorical figures *there*, in other words, or are they *not* there – at least from the perspective of this subjective figure (himself painted into this make-believe world)? ''In Signorelli's design nothing is outside a frame; everything is a centre from some point of view. And it is *grottesche* that foster this realisation'' (Harpham (1982) 40).

From Margins to Centre

What made the representational paradoxes of the Domus Aurea all the more striking were the ancient commentaries on the phenomenon (see the discussions in Walter-Karydi (1982) 138–47, Platt (2009) esp. 51–8, and Sauron (2009)). Renaissance critics were quick to associate these new finds with Vitruvius' late first-century BC discussions of contemporary Roman wall-painting. Vitruvius seemed to describe exactly the sorts of compositions found in Rome. At the same time, though, Vitruvius sounded a voice of dissent. Rather than represent ''what is or what can be'' (*quod est seu potest esse*: Vitruvius 7.5.1), latter-day painters were busying themselves with ''things that neither are, nor can be, nor have been'' (*nec sunt nec fieri possunt nec fuerunt*, 7.5.4):

> Those examples which were derived from definite things [*rebus finitis*] are now disdained by our improper tastes. For painted on our stucco walls are monsters rather than representations derived from definite things [*ex rebus finitis*]. Instead of columns there rise up grooved reeds; instead of gables there arise decorative panels with curved leaves and volutes.

Figure 25.5 Luca Signorelli, detail from the Cappella Nuova (also known as the San Brizio Chapel) in Orvieto Cathedral, *c.* 1499–1504.

The problem with such supposed *monstra* ("oddities," "portents," "monsters"/ "monstrosities"), Vitruvius continues, is their compositional lack of rhyme or reason (*sine ratione*): it is simply not natural to depict monstrous half-breeds – "artificial figures, some with human heads, others with the heads of wild beasts" (*sigilla alia humanis, alia bestiarum capitibus*). Other, no less trusted, authorities seemed to follow suit – among them Horace, Vitruvius' approximate contemporary, who famously opened his *Ars Poetica* by critiquing the painted image of a horse with human head and woman with fishy tail (vv. 1–13). So how, then, to square these ancient voices with the newly discovered material: were these ancient grotesques symptomatic of some later, post-classical Gothic or "Oriental" corruption; or else (heaven forefend!) dare one take issue with the aesthetic predilections of Vitruvius himself (cf. Barasch (1971) 25–31)?

One way around this dilemma was to conceptualize the grotesque as a sort of cryptic language (cf. esp. Morel (1997) 49–61). For all the puzzling forms and compositions, did these images embody an inner codified language? Were there symbolic, heraldic, and emblematic meanings underneath the enigmatic outward appearances? Ever since Cristoforo Buondelmonti had bestowed Italy with its first copy of Horapollo's late-antique *Hieroglyphika* in 1419, humanists had obsessed about the visual's capacity to embody concealed "hieroglyphic" significances. So were the grotesques really just flights of fancy? Or might they in fact materialize into something wholly more logical? Artists and viewers duly experimented with strategies of "writing" and "reading," inserting tried-and-tested hieroglyphs amid the geometric sprawl. Alessandra Araldi's eponymous *Camera dell'Araldi* completed in 1514 in the Convent of San Paolo at Parma provides one example. Still more innovative was Filippino Lippi's Chapel of Saint Thomas Aquinas in the Basilica of Santa Maria sopra Minerva in Rome (1489–93), in which allegorical symbols were inserted amid the stuccoed ceiling. Prows of ships, liturgical symbols, olive branches: all of these objects were loaded with military, ecclesiastical, and cultural symbolism for Lippi's patron, Cardinal Oliviero Carafa; as for the giant glass carafes, on the other hand, these were much less bizarre than they might first appear, visually punning on Carafa's name.

Such readings can only have added to the paradoxical associations of the grotesque. As ever, the power of these images lay in their figurative contradictions. Just as grotesques were both classical and non-classical, they could appear both meaningless and meaningful at one and the same time: if they were nonsensical visual entities, they also embodied the promise of emblematic decipherability. The real and the unreal, the believable and the incredible, the significant and the nonsensical, the trivial and the important, the reasonable and the meaningless: the grotesque intrigued precisely because it visually broke down these verbally established dialectics. By inviting viewers to *look*, the grotesque invited meta-reflection on how we find sense in what we see.

It is in this context that we should understand the most famous and spectacular grotesques of the sixteenth century: those designed by Raphael in the decade before his death in 1520 (Dacos (1969) 100–15). As Vasari noted, Raphael was said to have visited the Domus Aurea with his apprentice, Giovanni da Udine. It was to be the start of a lifelong partnership, whereby Raphael masterminded overall designs, while Giovanni delivered on individual motifs. Like earlier artists before him, Raphael seems to have at first relegated the grotesque to peripheral and marginal roles (in the vaulted ceiling of his 1514 Vatican *Stanza di Eliodoro*, for example, or in the soffits of the arches in the Loggia of Psyche in Rome's Villa della Farnesina). But by the time Raphael began painting the Stufetta of Cardinal Bibbiena (1516) – a bathroom connected to the cardinal's private apartment in the Vatican – something seems to have changed. Not only have individual grotesque motifs been upgraded so as to star in the framed panels of the vaulted ceiling, but the whole room is frescoed in bright colors, with the upper sections of the wall now featuring elaborate *mises-en-scènes* (Redig de Campos (1983); Dacos (2008) 29–33; Zamperini (2008) 124–8).

Further commissions followed. The Stufetta of Cardinal Bibbiena was in fact just one private chamber within the third storey of a grand pontifical palace designed by Bramante, so that Raphael was soon instructed to mastermind the adjacent "Loggetta" (on the same storey as the Stufetta). Raphael worked alongside not only Giovanni da

Figure 25.6 Raphael and Giovanni da Udine, Loggetta of Cardinal Bibbiena, *c*. 1516. *Source*: Photo ©2012 by Abigail Price

Udine, but also Perino del Vaga (whose signature is also to be found in the Domus Aurea: Dacos (1969) 140). If the grotesque looms large in Raphael's Stufetta, it quite literally takes over in the Loggetta (Figure 25.6). There can be no doubting the inspiration here (cf. Dacos (1969) 105–7; (2008) 33–6): both the white background and the individual motifs are taken from the cryptoporticus (Room 92) of the Domus Aurea; as Nicole Dacos has argued, moreover, Raphael seems to have engaged not only with the archaeological remains, but also with Vitruvius' diatribe against Roman *monstra*, "giving humorous form to that which he condemned," and representing "things that were even more contrary to reality" (Dacos (2008) 33–4). Most noteworthy of all is the barrel vault: although the compartmentalized animals of the pergola ceiling directly allude to those in the cryptoporticus, the Loggetta's wondrous creatures break free from their frames; in every sense, these figures are at once containable and uncontainable within the painted space of the vaulted ceiling.

The climax of Raphael's experiments with the grotesque came in the grand Loggia installed directly beneath the Loggetta, and decorated between 1517 and 1519 (cf. esp. Piel (1962) 1–87; Dacos (1969) 107–13, (1976), (1986), (2008) esp. 15–135) (Plate 4 and Figure 25.7). In structural terms, this central, Ionic storey of the pontifical palace comprises 13 vaulted bays, with statues originally arranged between the niches. Today, the Loggia is most famous for the 52 panel paintings which have collectively come to be termed "Raphael's Bible" (cf. Davidson (1985)): raising our eyes within each bay, we find each of the ceiling vaults crossed with four painted panels relating to

Figure 25.7 Raphael and Giovanni da Udine, ceiling decoration of the first vault (south end) of the Loggia in the Vatican, with scenes relating to the Creation, *c.* 1517–19.

biblical stories (Figure 25.7); of the 13 bays, 12 engage with grouped episodes from the Old Testament, while just one depicts scenes from the life of Jesus.

As for the walls of the Loggia, these are filled with a wealth of miniature painted ornament, arranged in vertical strips. The frescoes are interspersed with painted stucco reliefs, grouped together around the piers, spandrels, and soffits of the arches (Plate 4). These reliefs quickly became famous in their own right. Vasari relates how Giovanni da Udine took his inspiration from the grottoes, rediscovering the original stucco formula that had been used by mixing white travertine lime with powdered white marble. According to Vasari, Giovanni was urged on by Raphael: indeed, Vasari adds, Raphael instructed him to "decorate all the vaulting there [in the Loggia] in stucco, with most beautiful ornaments bordered by grotesques similar to the antique [*simili all'antiche*], and with very lovely and fantastic inventions, all full of the most varied and extravagant things that could possibly be imagined" (II.578: Vasari (1984) 449).

Although the Loggia takes its inspiration from the Domus Aurea, the replicative games have here moved into overdrive. Not only do individual hybrids challenge the conventions

of painted illusion and symmetry – the wings and hind legs of a painted man-cum-insect-cum-frog pointing fun at a sort of "Vitruvian Man," for instance (Plate 4) – but these are framed within a multi-tiered puzzle of visual simulations. Each microscopic flight of fancy takes its grotesque place amongst wholly more credible creations, both within each vertical mural section (observe the real-life snakes, snails, rats, lizards, mice, squirrels, and weasels which fumble and feed around the central foliage), and within each arch (hence the wholly more naturalistic bows of fruit and flowers in the lunettes around the arched windows, this time against a sky-blue background, with birds perched among the fray). The spaces of each window also add to the conceit. While the eastern windows grant direct access to real-life openings in the wall, some of those on the west are decorated with make-believe landscapes (e.g. Bay 13), while others are adorned instead with yet more grotesque figures, this time floating in black open space (e.g. Bay 5).

What is really special about the Loggia's representational games, however, is their unfolding beneath the biblical narrative scenes above (the best photographic archive is Dacos (2008) 139–209, with references to earlier bibliography). Whatever we make of these flights of visual fancy, the challenge lies in integrating them with the Old and New Testament stories depicted on the ceiling. So visually stunning and intriguing is this room, writes Vasari, that "the most one could say would be too little – it is better to pass over them in silence rather than seek to attempt the impossible" (II.578: Vasari (1984) 449). At the same time, however, the celestial Judaeo-Christian myth-histories of the ceiling bestow the ultimate promise of order – a divine sense of direction, as well as the verbal reference-point of the Bible: the linear narrative sequence of the biblical scenes, from the Creation to the Last Supper, is in one sense at odds with our tendency to stop and stare at each grotesque detail below (Plate 4), and *vice versa*. If the fascination of the grotesque had always lain in its multi-stable ambiguity between order and chaos, this particular juxtaposition brings the ambivalence to a head, combining in one magisterial swoop the pagan with the Christian, the secular with the divine, and indeed the capricious with the redemptive.

Just like Signorelli's frescoes in the Capella Nuova in Orvieto (Figure 25.5), the Loggia's decoration proceeds to imbue the grotesque with a series of theological questions. Of course, one way of making sense of the Loggia is in terms of a dialectic between the serious and trivial. But the assemblage also challenges us to rethink any such delineation between the empty and the meaningful. The biblical paintings themselves testify to the difficulties of figuration, especially when it comes to figuring the divine: after all, the painted panels show God to have made himself manifest in all manner of different visual forms – the floating Father of the Creation, a burning bush, a column of light parting the Red Sea, a *grisaille* sketch, a pillar of cloud, and ultimately the figure of Christ himself. So where exactly to draw the limits between signifying form and signified content: is the decorative frame peripheral to the room's biblical core, or are the biblical scenes themselves part and parcel of some ornamental excess?

To appreciate the larger intellectual and religious stakes, one need only remember the upheavals that would erupt north of the Alps within a decade of the Loggia's completion (for an introduction, see especially Koerner (2004), along with Squire (2009) 15–43). Where Protestant protestors would rally against the materiality of religious practice (and in particular the perceived idolatry of the Roman Catholic Church), Raphael's Loggia *visually* interrogates the nature of figurative and non-figurative representation.

Combining the real with the fantastic, and indeed the didactic with the nonsensical, Raphael exploits the grotesque to interrogate the mechanics of both image and imagination. He does so, moreover, against an explicitly religious backdrop.

A Visually Mediated Discourse of Renaissance Visuality

Rapahel's Loggia was an immediate success: "a loggia decorated with paintings and stucco in the style of antiquity [*all'antica*] . . . as beautiful as can be" – that is how Baldassar Castiglione labeled it in a letter to Isabelle d'Este in 1519 (quoted by Dacos (2008) 15). This led to numerous related commissions, first in Rome (the ceilings of the Palazzo Baldassini, the Sala dei Pontefici in the Vatican, and the Villa Madama, for example), and then beyond, fuelled by the exodus of artists from Rome after Charles V's invasion in 1526. Engravings by the likes of Marcantonio Raimondi, Agostino Veneziano, Giangiacomo Caraglio, and Marco Marchetti served as an additional catalyst (Dacos (1969) 95–7): by the mid-sixteenth century, whole collections of printed plates were being published – like the famous *c.* 1543 catalogue of "Rather lighthearted and (apparently) *ex tempore* pictures commonly called 'grotesques' " (*Leuiores et (ut uidetur) extemporaneae picturae quas grotteschas uulgo uocant*). Similar albums rose to fame outside Italy. Inspired by François I's fondness for the grotesque at Fontainebleau, artists like Androuet du Cerceau, Étienne Delaune, and Joseph Boillot de Langres produced French catalogues of engravings; in Flanders too, pattern books helped in spreading the fame of the grotesque to northern Europe, thanks above all to (the aptly named) Cornelis Floris. By the third quarter of the sixteenth century, grotesque imagery was to be found all over Europe – from printed plates to ceramics (cf. Dacos (1969) 97–8), and from Andrés de Melgar's work in Spanish Granada to the Antiquarium of the Residenz at Munich (for an excellent survey, see Zamperini (2008) 147–95, with Warnke (1979) on the German reception).

By no means everyone approved. Interestingly, some cultural landscapes proved more resistant than others. In the stalwartly Protestant palaces of Tudor England, for example, the grotesque was already tainted by the perceived excesses of Roman Catholicism (Zamperini (2008) 192–3): did the grotesque not embody a sort of corrupted image, whereby form was estranged from meaning?

Such resistance only added to the debate. The fundamental question was whether or not there could be any *intellectual* justification for the grotesque's artistic caprice. In the wake of the Counter-Reformation, this little question seems to have taken on an ever-greater significance; indeed, we see the late sixteenth-century obsession with the grotesque reflected in the two editions of Vasari's *Lives* in 1551 and 1568 – the first containing 41 references to the term, the second 104 (Huber (2007) 806). For many critics, a defense was to be found in the appeal to the creative imagination, implicating the grotesque within artistic "Mannerism" at large (Dacos (1969) 121–35; Morel (1985); Huber (2007) 806–7; Zamperini (2008) 170–8; for the art-historical development, cf. Bredekamp (2000)). Different writers adopted different takes. But all variously engaged with what they perceived as the balance between order and chaos. For Anton Francesco Doni, whose treatise on *Disegno* was first published in 1549, grotesque

capricci could be justified in terms of their dreamlike quality: they gave figurative form to the fickle fantasies of nature (Scholl (2004) 99–110). Francesco d'Olanda expounded a related argument a few years later, talking of the artist's "licence" (and attributing his own argument to Michelangelo himself): artists should be free to put together the parts of a composition in whatever way they chose, while nevertheless heeding to the truthfulness of each representational unit (Scholl (2004) 341–4). For Gian Paolo Lomazzo, the "orderliness" of the grotesque was differently conceived: despite their strange appearances, after all, did these images not clothe a perfectly rational, pseudo-linguistic, *hieroglyphic* significance (Scholl (2004) 465–71; compare the writings of Pirro Ligorio, transcribed in Dacos (1969) 161–82)?

The point to emphasize is that the grotesque mediated a whole late-Renaissance *discourse* about image-making. At stake in these weird and wonderful forms were all-encompassing debates about vision and iconicity. Better perhaps, it was the grotesque's propensity to ask questions that made it so good to think with. The grotesque embodied a "mediating principle in the confrontation between order and non-order" (Robertson (1996) 1): it offered a visual means for contemplating visual meaning, probing the simultaneous proximity and distance between ancient and modern standards.

It is for this reason that the discovery of the Domus Aurea arguably constitutes *the* archaeological discovery of the Italian Renaissance. This is something all too easy to overlook. Conditioned by the Neo-classical movements of the eighteenth century, we often tend to think of the grotesque as mere ornament and decoration. With Neo-classicism, writes Zamperini, "the grotesque was finally purged of its every subversive implication . . . The grotesque – and with it classical ornament as a whole – became just one of the many repertoires on which painters, architects and decorators drew" (Zamperini (2008) 269, 271). Given this demotion to peripheral ornament, it is little wonder that critics such as Ruskin so berated the grotesque in the nineteenth century: "if we can draw the human body in the perfection of its grace and movement we have no business to take away its limbs, and terminate it with a bunch of leaves"; the decorated walls of Raphael's Loggia, or indeed the Domus Aurea decoration before it, Ruskin adds, are not only a "tissue of nonsense," but "an unnatural and monstrous abortion" (Ruskin (1851) 144; cf. Harpham (1982) 30–1, 183–5; Connelley (2003)).

This chapter has attempted to demonstrate something more profound. Whatever we make of the grotesque in formal or intellectual terms, it mediated some of the most important ideas and ideologies of Renaissance visuality. As the name alone suggests, all of this was dependent upon the rediscovery of the Domus Aurea "grottoes," with their mass of strange and puzzling decorative forms. This makes Nero's palace not only one of the most important sites for the reception of Neronian culture, but also among the most significant focal points for the reception of Graeco-Roman art at large.

FURTHER READING

The best pictorial and textual guides to the Domus Aurea are Segala and Sciortino (1999) and Iacopi (1999), both with references to the earlier bibliography, and both with a keen interest on the Renaissance afterlife. The most lively introduction to the role of the antique in forging Renaissance culture more generally is Barkan (1999); Weiss (1969) is also useful.

In terms of the reception of the Domus Aurea, the most accessible and lavishly illustrated guide is Zamperini (2008), esp. 91–195 on the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. "So widespread

was the vogue [for the grotesque],'' as Zamperini argues, ''that any concerted attempt to list grotesques would be as long as it would be futile'' (147). Other scholars have attempted precisely this. The most important analyses are by Nicole Dacos – not only her French book on ''the discovery of the Domus Aurea and the formation of grotesques in the Renaissance'' (Dacos (1969), but also her magisterial book on Raphael's Loggia (Dacos (2008)), as well as numerous other related volumes and articles (Dacos (1966), (1976), (1986), (1990), (1996), (2001)). More interested in the literary and cultural stakes is Scholl (2004) – a German Habilitation dissertation with an abundance of footnotes and a 52-page bibliography. A much shorter guide can be found in Huber (2007).

There are numerous more theoretical analyses of the ''grotesque'' and its intellectual-cum-cultural history: Yates (1997) 13–39 offers a handy review of twentieth-century scholarship, focusing in particular on the work of Wolfgang Kayser (translated into an accessible English edition as Kayser (1981)), Mikhail Bakhtin (1968), and Geoffrey Galt Harpham (1982). There are several other thematic guides, although many tend to focus on the concept of the literary grotesque at the expense of the art-historical: Barasch (1971) provides one of the best balanced, while Piel (1962), Harpham (1982) 3–76, Chastel (1988), and Morel (1997) strike me as among the most intellectually scintillating and visually sensitive. More generally on the intellectual backdrop – the late Renaissance concern with cataloguing nature on the one hand, and the rise of the museum and collection on the other – see Findlen (1994), esp. 1–11: although the author finds little room for the grotesque, the genre epitomizes precisely the cultural concern with ''possessing nature'' that Findlen discusses.

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Epilogue

CHAPTER 26

Nachwort: Nero from Zero to Hero

Miriam Griffin

The title of this epilogue points to the recent rehabilitation of Nero among classical scholars, particularly among Anglophone ones, which I will explain in terms of certain fashions current in classical scholarship. Even serious activities like medicine and scholarship are subject to changes of fashion: interests shift, preoccupations change, and different questions are asked. Having uncovered some of the causes of the recent change of heart about Nero, I shall explore these same interests and preoccupations when they appear, as they do appear, in our ancient historical sources on him, and then compare our own current impression of the emperor with the impression that emerges from the ancient treatment of these same themes. Tacitus' treatment of Nero, in particular, as tyrant and showman, will come in towards the end for some extended discussion.

Nero the Hero

The formulation of Charles Merivale in the mid-nineteenth century can stand for Nero at zero. Speaking of the unanimous opinion about Nero in our ancient sources, he wrote, "With some allowance only for extravagance of colouring, we must accept in the main the verisimilitude of the picture they have left us of this arch-tyrant, the last and the most detestable of the Caesarean family" (Merivale (1858) 311). The turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries produced whitewashes of all of the Julio-Claudian emperors, the technique – and indeed the aim – of the exercise being to discredit the hostile verdict of antiquity, by attributing it to the prejudices of the upper-class authors who provide our information (see Hurley in this volume). This technique is still applied to Nero, but it is now a means, not an end, since the reasons for a positive evaluation are now different.

In his scintillating book on Nero, Champlin (2003) takes as his fundamental question, "Why is Nero so fascinating?" (236). He sets out to explain why Nero is "a folk-hero"

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(21), why he is the only Roman to be "a living presence for centuries after his death," and why "of all the non-Christian men and women of classical antiquity, his name surely arouses the widest interest today" (235).

No one can deny that Nero did fascinate, and continues to fascinate. In AD 69, the year after his death at the age of 30, and at 10-year intervals after that, three false Neros appeared in the east, all young and all playing the lyre (Tacitus, *Histories* 2.8–9; Dio 64.9.3; AD 80: Dio 66.19.3b; AD 88–9: Suetonius, *Nero* 57). Towards the end of that century, Dio Chrysostom wrote, alluding to the credibility that these false Neros enjoyed, "Even now his subjects wish he were still alive, and most men believe that he is" (*Orations* 21.10). That was a tribute to Nero's philhellenism, but even in Rome among the ordinary population, for a long time, some laid spring and summer flowers on his tomb and set up again his overturned statues (Suetonius, *Nero* 57.2; Tacitus, *Histories* 1.4.3; cf. 1.25, 1.72.1). The immediate successors to Galba, whose age, stinginess, and stern demeanor led to unflattering comparisons with his young and flamboyant predecessor (Tacitus, *Histories* 1.7.3), were keen to remind people of their earlier association with Nero (Otho: *Histories* 1.78.2; cf. Plutarch, *Otho* 3.1–2; Suetonius, *Otho* 7.1, 10.2; Dio 64.9.1, 65.4.1; Vitellius: Tacitus, *Histories* 2.95.1; Suetonius, *Vitellius.* 11.2; Dio 65.4.1). In other quarters, though, his reputation was darker. In the Jewish Sibylline Oracles, written not long after the destruction of the great Temple of Jerusalem and the theft of its treasures by Titus, Nero is represented as the exile from Rome, the great king and matricide, who has fled to the Parthians and will cross the Euphrates with tens of thousands of men, to destroy Rome and the whole world (*Sibylline* 4.119–24, 138–9, 5.137–52, 362–85: see Maier in this volume). The Christians, whom he had persecuted, similarly inverted the Greek hope that the philhellene emperor would return. In their oracular and apocalyptic outpourings, Nero is the Antichrist, whose persecution of the Christians heralds the destruction of Rome (8.70–90). The Church Fathers attest that the identification of Nero with Antichrist was well-entrenched in their time (Lactantius, *De Mortibus Persecutorum* 2; Augustine, *City of God* 20.19; Jerome, *Commentary on Daniel* II.28/30). It continued as Christianity triumphed. Even in the pagan Greek east, his lively memory darkened by the second and third century, as the two most popular acts of his lifetime were obliterated and lost their charm: the first, the cutting of the isthmus of Corinth, had, after all, been quickly abandoned by him (Suetonius, *Nero* 19.2; Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius* 4.24; 5.7), while the second, his generosity in freeing old Greece from provincial status, had quickly been cancelled by Vespasian (Suetonius, *Vespasian* 8.4; Pausanias 7.17.4; Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius* 5.41: see Mratschek in this volume).

What is so suggestive about Champlin's account is that he is clearly an admirer of Nero, while claiming that he does not intend to justify Nero's actions or to rehabilitate his character (Champlin (2003) 236). Indeed, he states quite early on that "he was a bad man and a bad ruler" (52). But Champlin plays down (27, 102) the predominantly negative character of Philostratus' picture of Nero. The erasure of Nero's name from monuments he puts down to "outbursts of private zeal" (29); the re-carving of Nero's portraits, a practice particularly common in regard to that emperor, he turns into a compliment: it shows that Nero's portraits were preserved for a long time (30–31). In fact, it is more likely that they were immediately put into cold storage on his death (Tacitus, *Histories* 1.78) and were thus available for re-use in the interests of economy

(Varner (2004) 85; Coleman (2005) 249–50). And, displaying a well-loved technique of classical rhetoric, Champlin's pro and con survey of Nero ends with the positive aspects (82–3). Nothing can dim his admiration. Nor is Champlin alone in his enthusiasm. I name but a small sample of recent admirers: Dupont (1985); Schmidt (1990); Elsner and Masters (1994); Bartsch (1994).

Reasons for the Change in Attitude: Visual Interests

The most important ingredient in the new view of Nero is the increased awareness among ancient historians of the importance to their work of visual and archaeological evidence. There is a parallel here to the way in which art historians have become more interested in historical context, abandoning the self-standing linear history of changing techniques for art history that takes account of what is going on around the artist.

On the visual side, Nero scores heavily, as he has always scored. "What is worse than Nero; what is better than Nero's baths?" wrote Martial after the tyrant's death (7.34). The baths are gone, probably covered by the remains of Titus' baths, but we still have the remains of the Domus Aurea on the Esquiline, and we can admire Nero's magnificent coins. The coins show an aesthetic leap from earlier imperial coinage, both in portraiture and in the design of the reverses. The palace, too, still excites the admiration of architects for its radical techniques of construction: the use of concrete, the new systems of vaulting, the creation of internal vistas (on the baths and palace, see Beste and von Hesburg in this volume). Enough survives of the frescoes in the Golden House to explain the inspiration they gave to Renaissance artists and to many a decorated villa, then and later (see Squire in this volume). Ancient descriptions of the palace allow us to imagine it in all its grandeur, especially after its recent restoration by the Italians and the revelation of an upper floor and of the total symmetry of the whole edifice. Nor is there any reason to doubt the ancient testimony that Nero was personally involved in the creation of his buildings (Tacitus, *Annals* 15.42–3; Suetonius, *Nero* 16.1), as he was in the work of the writers of his time (*Annals* 14.16; *Nero* 52), and that the later emperors Otho and Vitellius lived in the palace, which Otho enthusiastically embarked on finishing (Suetonius, *Otho* 7.1), but Vitellius and his wife professed to despise (Dio 65.4.1–2).

Pessimists may see this current enthusiasm among classicists for the visual as compensation for the inevitable shift of interest from linguistic and textual work, now that real expertise in the classical languages is less widespread. But this visual interest also stems from the genuine realization that appearances and presentation are interesting historical facts in themselves, not just something to be peeled off to reveal the reality, usually political, that lies beneath.

Theatre in Particular

More than any other aspect of the visual, what has worked in Nero's favor is the current interest among scholars in the theatre, both in the narrow sense of drama and, more

pertinently, in the wider one of spectacle of all kinds. I say "more pertinently," because Nero was, after all, known for his *spectacula*, as Suetonius points out (*Nero* 11); and in Rome the physical venues of theatre, amphitheatre, and circus could house similar kinds of events. Nero's personal performances included music, drama, and chariot-racing – that is, both theatrical and circus performances (see Fantham, Mratschek in this volume).

Current fascination with the blurring between reality and fiction that characterizes theatre of any period, and the blurring between actor and audience that characterizes theatre under an autocratic regime (where even the audience may pretend) finds plenty to feed on in the stories about Nero: the "actor-emperor" (*imperator scaenicus*) of Pliny (*Panegricus* 46.4), the "harp-playing-emperor" (*citharoedus princeps*) of Juvenal (8.198–9).

Nero's passion for music, poetry, and drama was initially kept within bounds. At first he did not perform in his own public spectacles, confining himself to racing chariots in a private circus (Tacitus, *Annals* 14.14–15; Pliny, *Natural History* 36.74) and to singing tragic arias to the lyre on a private stage (*Annals* 15.33; *Natural History* 37.19). He first performed on a public stage in 64 in Naples, a city Greek in name and culture (Tacitus, *Annals* 15.33). Only at the second staging of his Greek-style games, the Neronia, in 65, did he actually recite from his epic poem on Troy and perform on the lyre (*Annals* 16.4; Dio 62.29). Finally, on the Greek tour in 66–7, he performed for the first time as a tragic actor, wearing a costume and a mask in what may have been "concert tragedies": excerpts or scenes, not full-length dramas. (Champlin (2003) 78–9).

Everyone has their favorite vignette to illustrate the blurring of reality and fiction in Nero's performances. There are the soldiers on duty in the theatre who think he needs rescuing, when he is performing "The Frenzy of Heracles" in chains, or who believe he is in labor when he acts Canace giving birth (Suetonius, *Nero* 21.3; Dio 63.10.2). There is the intriguing detail that Nero's masks sometimes bore his own likeness, and that in female roles they had the features of Poppaea Sabina, his murdered wife (Dio 63.9.5). There is the popular rumor that Nero recited his epic on the burning of Troy as Rome actually went up in flames (Tacitus, *Annals* 15.39; Dio 63.29.2; Suetonius, *Nero* 38.2). No wonder that in Massinger's play *The Roman Actor*, the character Domitian is made to cite the precedent of Nero before he goes on stage in the role of an aggrieved husband, and kills the actor Paris, who was cast as, and who actually was, the adulterous lover of his wife.

Then there are Nero's theatrical performances off-stage, such as his dressing up as a slave and enjoying the low life of Rome (Tacitus, *Annals* 13.25) or his use of a collapsible boat, such as he had seen in the theatre (Dio 61.12.2) (or amphitheatre: Bartsch (1994) 60) – to murder his mother. And, finally, there is the suicide scene, with the famous punchline, "What an artist dies with me" (*Qualis artifex pereo*), uttered just before the fatal jab (Suetonius, *Nero* 49.1; Dio 63.29.2). The Christians, too, found themselves providing a spectacle, being dressed up as beasts to be attacked by hunting dogs or made into human torches to pay for their alleged crime of arson (*Annals* 15.44.2–5). In fact, it is in Nero's reign that we find the earliest evidence for the "fatal charades," as Coleman (1990) has called them, in which criminals die re-enacting stories from mythology. This increasing make-believe is seen by some as a reflection of the increasing unreality in public life produced by the republican professions and pretences of a *de facto* monarchy; by others as a simple search for novelty in public entertainment (Wiedemann

(1992) 85). Similarly, Bowersock (1994: 22) reminds us that, in the Roman empire, "the beginning of the mass proliferation of fiction can be assigned pretty clearly to the reign of Nero" (see Hansen in this volume).

As for the blurring between actor and audience, we think of Octavia pretending not to know that her brother Britannicus' death is murder (Tacitus, *Annals* 13.16.4); or of Agrippina sending a messenger to her son to reassure him that she has survived her so-called accident (*Annals* 14.6); or the Praetorians, coached by Burrus, offering congratulations to Nero on his lucky escape from his mother's plot (*Annals* 14.10.1–2). We think also of Nero's well-trained claque (*Annals* 14.15.5; Dio 61.20.3–4; Suetonius, *Nero* 20.3), and of his soldiers who forced the audience to applaud, and of his freedmen who reported those who failed in enthusiasm (*Annals* 16.5.3). But there is also the encouragement offered to respectable and highborn men and women to perform on the stage themselves (Dio 61.19.3; *Annals* 14.20–21; *Nero* 12.3), and the need for Nero's competitors to act out, not only a role from tragic drama, but the role of a genuinely beaten rival (Ps.-Lucian, *Nero* 8).

Further Reasons: Greek Identity under Roman rule

Another current scholarly interest relevant to the rehabilitation of Nero is our interest in the literature of the Greek-speaking east, and in the problems of identity felt in that part of the world under Roman rule. Identity and self-representation are generally of interest to scholars; that is related, perhaps, to contemporary concern with ethnicity; and the Greek east presents them in a particularly complex and articulate form (Whitmarsh (2001). Nero himself identified his own artistic interests as Greek. He had relatively little interest in the distinctively Roman gladiatorial contests, though he gave such entertainments and made them more sensational by inducing Roman knights and senators, and even highborn women, to perform in the arena (Tacitus, *Annals* 14.14.4, 15.32; Wiedemann (1992) 112). No respectable source, however, says that he himself aspired to Commodus-like antics in the arena, though Philostratus (*Life of Apollonius* 4.36) has the effete speaker Philolaus tell Apollonius that Nero drives a chariot in public, sings on the stage, and fights successfully as a gladiator: Wiedemann (1992: 132) appears to credit this. Acting was associated with foreigners, and Nero felt he could only be appreciated properly in Greece (Edwards (1994)). His institution of Greek-style games and acting schools for the elite, like his encouragement of nude athletics and of the gymnasium, suggests a proselytizing zeal to change Roman mores (Griffin (1984) 43–5, 113–14: see Beste and von Hesburg in this volume, and Mratschek in this volume). But in the east, to judge from the pseudo-Lucianic dialogue that bears his name, Nero's philhellenism was not always regarded as reflecting true Greek cultural traditions: Nero could be thought to be interested in the Greeks as a tourist attraction and a source of applause (Whitmarsh (1999) 148–54). Certainly, the most extravagant praise was expected and elicited by the speech he delivered announcing the liberation of Achaea: a speech which by good fortune has been preserved, along with the sycophantic decree of the town of Acraephia, on a marble pillar found in Boeotia (*Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* (*ILS*) 8794 = Smallwood, *Documents Illustrating the Principates of Gaius, Claudius*

and Nero, no. 64). Despite the positive reactions of Plutarch (*Antony* 87, *Moralia* 505 C, 567 F), Pausanias (9.27.4, 7.17.3), and Philostratus (*Life of Apollonius* 5.41, 4.38), some Greeks would have resented the fact that, in this speech, he tactlessly and condescendingly contrasts the Greece of his day with Greece in its heyday:

> All Greeks living in Achaea and the Peloponnese are to receive freedom and immunity from taxation – a thing none of you ever possessed in your most fortunate days, for you have always been subject either to others or to each other. Would that Greece were still at its peak as I grant you this gift, in order that more people might enjoy this favor I am conferring. I blame the times for thus reducing the greatness of my benefaction. It is not out of pity for you, but out of goodwill, that I bestow this favor, etc.

Nero ends this speech with the boast, "Other rulers have liberated cities; only Nero a province" – which brings us to another factor in his rehabilitation. (For more on this speech, see Mratschek in this volume.)

Further Reasons: Politicians and Spin

We have become increasingly used to politicians who make extensive use of more and more sophisticated media presentation and spin. At this, Nero was a past master. His re-enactment of the dramatic liberation of Greece by Flamininus two and a half centuries earlier – performed, as before, in Corinth and, as before, during the Isthmian Games – far outdid its model in theatricality and exhibitionism. Plutarch (*Flamininus* 10–12) shows us just how Nero upstaged his republican predecessor. Flamininus, sitting in his seat in the amphitheatre, had sent a herald into the centre to read his short pronouncement, "The Roman Senate and T. Quinctius Flamininus as the proconsul, having conquered King Philip and the Macedonians, restores to freedom, without garrisons and without taxes, and to the enjoyment of their ancient laws, the peoples of Greece." That was the style of 196 BC. It was not Nero's. First, he ordered as many people as possible to come to Corinth for the occasion. Then, on the day, he went to the marketplace, and on a platform, closely surrounded by his audience, delivered his lengthy address in person, showing off his Greek (Plutarch, *Flamininus* 12.8). The speech is written in an elegant and elaborate Greek, characteristic of the Hellenistic and Roman period: it has been suggested that Nero was trained in Greek rhetoric by the famous sophist Nicetes of Smyrna, who is mentioned by Philostratus, *Lives of the Sophists* 1.19.1–2 (Jones (2003) 237–9). Nero probably composed the speech in Greek himself: at least his key speechwriter Seneca, whose Greek was also excellent (Bowersock (2003)), was already dead.

In 64, after performing at Naples, Nero composed his own sensational press dispatch. What a story he had to tell! The theatre collapsed in an earthquake just after he and his audience had left, and there were no casualties. To counter rumors that the collapse showed divine displeasure with the emperor's loss of dignity, Nero wrote a poem on his providential escape, giving thanks to the Gods for the happy outcome, and interpreting the event as a sign of divine favor (Suetonius, *Nero* 20.2; Tacitus, *Annals* 15.34). How well known these verses became, we learn from Suetonius' *Life of Lucan*. The poet Lucan, already out of favor with the emperor, decided to show his opinion of

Nero's verses about this earthquake. He recited the emperor's half-line, "You would think it had thundered underground" (*sub terris tonuisse putes*) in a public lavatory, and himself provided the appropriate sound effects. "Those who were there for the same purpose took to their heels," writes Suetonius, showing that the words were immediately recognized as imperial verse.

In addition to spin Nero strikes a chord with contemporary politics in another way, – his youth. Of course, he was much younger than the Obamas of today; but then he was not being compared to recent and contemporary rulers in their seventies and eighties. Now that political parties in England and America are virtually indistinguishable both in policies and in the sections of the electorate to which they appeal, the only way to suggest the possibility of change seems to be to turn to youth. For Nero, his youth was more of a disadvantage, given the Roman tradition of the *cursus honorum*, according to which he was too young even for the first political office, now held at the age of 25. Nero worked at turning his problems into an advantage, making, characteristically, a show out of it in the Juvenalia, games to celebrate his coming of age at 21.

There are, no doubt, other reasons one could adduce for the modern rehabilitation of Nero, but it is time now to turn to our second theme: namely, the way in which our surviving ancient historians treat the main features of Nero that have led to this rehabilitation, particularly Nero's showmanship.

Nero the Showman in the Ancient Historical Sources

Our existing literary accounts of Nero's reign reflect the excitement generated by the emperor's entertainments. Suetonius, the imperial biographer, was an expert on games, having written one volume (in Greek) on Greek games and two (in Latin) on Roman (Wallace-Hadrill (1983) 44–8). His interest in the dates when different festivals were established is shown in his biography of Nero, where the emperor is described as "the first of all the Romans to institute a quinquennial competition in Greek fashion with three parts, musical, athletic, and equestrian, which he called the Neronia" (*Nero* 12.3). The *spectacula* of Nero are described in the "blameless" section of the life (11–13), but Nero's personal performances – singing, acting, and racing chariots – are detailed later among his "shameful and criminal acts" (20–25) and include, along with the coercion of applause and of attendance, his careful training, his punctilious adherence to the rules of performance, and even the liberation of Greece. Suetonius, born just after Nero's death, not only used scholarly research for his biography: he knew of Nero from contemporary witnesses (*Nero* 29), including his own grandfather (*Gaius* 19.3) and his father (*Otho* 10). He is aware that Nero could turn anything into a show. So he writes, for example, "I may justifiably include among his *spectacula* the entrance of Tiridates into the city" (*Nero* 13: see Mratschek and D. Braund in this volume). In fact, so inspired is Suetonius by Nero's showmanship that he outdoes himself in this biography, producing a long and dramatic account of Nero's last days and of his death (40–49). That account is the principal source of Champlin's striking opening chapter.

Champlin could also draw on the death narrative by Cassius Dio, born a century after the event (63.27.3–29.2). Dio treats Nero's death, in the words of Shadi Bartsch, as "a

prolonged theatrical metaphor'' (Bartsch (1994) 43): ''Such was the drama that Fate now prepared for him, so that he should no longer play other matricides and other beggars, but only himself'' (63.28.4). Dio's account of Nero's reign is imperfectly preserved, and yet the magic of Nero's showmanship emerges even from the Byzantine excerpts, and the reader encounters many such striking moments, notably, the ''triumphal'' progress of Tiridates to Rome and his coronation in 66 as king of Armenia (63.1.2–6.3). Dio describes how Nero entered the Forum at daybreak, wearing triumphal dress, and seated himself on the *rostra*. The civilians were dressed in white with laurel branches and arranged according to rank (just as in the theatre). Champlin (2003: 228) points out that Nero was probably facing the rising sun, which ''would have hit him full on the face in all his triumphal splendour.'' Tiridates and his entourage entered the Forum, passing between the soldiers arrayed in shining armor, with their weapons and their standards flashing like lightning. Dio writes (62.5.1–4),

> At this a great roar went up, which so alarmed Tiridates that for some moments he stood speechless, in terror of his life. Then silence was proclaimed, he recovered courage and, quelling his pride, made himself as subservient as the occasion demanded. ''Master; he said,'' ''I am the descendant of Arsaces, brother of the kings Vologaesus and Pacorus, and your slave.'' I have come to worship you, as I do Mithras: the destiny you spin for me shall be mine, for you are my Fortune and my Fate. ''Nero replied,'' ''King of Armenia I now declare you, that you may understand that I have power to take away kingdoms and to bestow them.'' Then when Tiridates had ascended the platform and was sitting at his feet, Nero took the turban from his head and replaced it with the diadem.

This ''Golden Day'' also featured a celebration in the theatre, gilded inside and outside for the occasion, with a purple awning overhead showing Nero driving a chariot with golden stars around him. Nero then performed on the lyre and actually drove a chariot, performances that, according to Dio, disgusted Tiridates (63.6.1–4). The mixture of victor and virtuoso is remarkable.

We can have no doubt by now that the same aspects of Nero as have helped in his current rehabilitation, were exploited by our ancient authors to produce striking and vivid tableaux, which they, however, accompanied by clear indications of hostility and contempt. For we find the same mixture of fascination and condemnation, that we have encountered *à propos* of his spectacles, if we look at their descriptions of Nero's extravagant building activities, notably the Golden House (Suetonius, *Nero* 31; Dio 63.16, 63.26.3; Tacitus, *Annals* 15.42), and if we look at what they say of his self-publicity, including the celebration of his youth (Suetonius, *Nero* 10.2, 12.4; 30; Dio 61.19.1, 62.18.1, 62.23.4, 63.26.1–2; Tacitus, *Annals* 14.15.5). The ancient authors had no doubt that all these things belonged to *luxuria*, and, in particular, did not befit an emperor.

However, it was left to the greatest historian of Nero to draw the most successful literary inspiration from the *imperator scaenicus*, while, at the same time, producing the most damning judgment on him.

Tacitus in Particular

Tacitus was probably born in AD 57, two or three years into Nero's reign. He could have seen the Golden House of Nero as it was being built. He was 11 years old when

Nero committed suicide. For him, the reign of Nero was a period that straddled the divide between past and contemporary history. When, in his late fifties, Tacitus came to write up the entire reign of Nero in the *Annals*, there were still people for him to speak to who remembered the period at first hand. For at *Annals* 15.73 he writes of the Pisonian conspiracy, "Those who returned to Rome after Nero's death testify to there having been a real conspiracy." But in that work Tacitus treated the reign of Nero as the last episode of the Julio-Claudians. He went back a century, 40 years before Nero, to AD 14, into the period really known only by his grandparents.

For our historian, then, the Neronian period was on the brink of the history of his own time, as it appears in the *Histories*; but it was also continuous with a more remote past – the past era of the Julio-Claudian emperors, which was dramatically divided from the present by the traumatic experience of civil war. In fact, Tacitus clearly felt that the period covered by the *Annals* was separated from his adult life, not only by that violent upheaval, but also by the remarkable change in lifestyle that accompanied it.

Tacitus marks this change in lifestyle at *Annals* 3.55:

> The luxury of the table – which, from the end of the war of Actium to the hostilities that brought Servius Galba to power, was practiced for a century with surging expenditure – gradually went out of fashion. The reasons for that change may well be examined. Formerly, aristocratic families of wealth or outstanding distinction were apt to be led to their downfall by a passion for magnificence; for even then it was legitimate to court and be courted by the plebs, by allies, by kingdoms. As each man displayed himself by means of his house, wealth, and accoutrements, so he was considered more illustrious in terms of reputation and the possession of clients. After the savage slaughters had taken place, and once the greatness of one's reputation began to mean one's extermination, the rest converted to wiser courses . . . But the principal instigator of disciplined behavior was Vespasian, himself a man of an old-fashioned style of living.

Approving of the change of fashion that followed, Tacitus looks back with disapproval to a period when the great aristocratic families had their own followers among Rome's citizens and subjects and entertained them in magnificent mansions, only to be punished by jealous emperors for drawing too much attention to themselves. By going on to credit the change to more frugal tastes to the example of the small-town emperor Vespasian, he implicitly blames Nero and his predecessors for having set the earlier fashion.

In fact, it was Nero whom Tacitus saw as the climax of this post-Actium luxurious, not to say louche, style of life. With Nero, one had not only extravagance and conspicuous consumption, but also showmanship and exhibitionism (see Fantham in this volume). Nero's own performances, as Tacitus shows us, constitute a crescendo of exhibitionism, as the influence of his mother, and of Seneca and Burrus, waned and disappeared. First came chariot-racing in a purpose-built enclosure that was supposed to be private (*Annals* 14.14); then a private performance, singing and accompanying himself on the lyre at the Juvenalia in 59. Tacitus marks just how theatrical he was, not only tuning his lyre and trying practice notes to emphasize his professionalism, but leaving no detail to chance, not even the applause. He enrolled a gang of ambitious equestrian youths under the name of Augustiani who followed him around, a well-born fan club applauding his looks and his voice (*Annals* 14.15).

Nero still kept off the public stage himself, while encouraging other aristocrats to appear in public at the first Neronia in 60. The emperor was declared the winner in the contest for oratory, though he had not competed (*Annals* 14.21). Next came his

own public appearance in 64, but at Naples, a Greek city, where the Roman upper class traditionally released its inhibitions (*Annals* 15.33–4). Finally, Tacitus gives an account of Nero's first public performance, in Rome at the second Neronia in 65 (*Annals* 16.4–5). Here the historian describes more fully the professionalism of Nero, who refused to receive prizes without performing:

> He entered the theatre, scrupulously observing citharist etiquette. When tired, he remained standing. To wipe away perspiration, he used nothing but the robe he was wearing. He allowed no moisture from his mouth or nose to be visible. At the conclusion, he awaited the verdict of the judges in assumed trepidation, on bended knee, and with a gesture of deference to the public. And the public, used to applauding the poses even of professional actors, cheered in measured, rhythmical cadences.

Clearly they had learned from the claque trained, according to Suetonius, in the Alexandrian mode (Suetonius, *Nero* 20).

Tacitus reports each of these episodes with a commentary of increasing censoriousness, from the description of the upright Afranius Burrus, "grieving but applauding" at Nero's performance in his private theatre at his Youth Games (*Annals* 14.15.4), to his lengthy description of the disapproval of visitors to Rome from remote country towns in austere, old-fashioned Italy, or from distant provinces, who, at the second Neronia, could not keep in time with the expert applauders and were physically punished for it by the soldiers in attendance (*Annals* 16.5.1). He also depicts the suffering of Roman *equites* who were not allowed to leave the theatre even to meet the calls of nature and sometimes died of disease or suffocation (*Annals* 16.5.2). What must Tacitus have said about the shows that were to follow, in the part of his account that is lost?

Our surviving narrative peters out in May of 66, when the arrival in Rome of Tiridates, king of Armenia, coincided with the trials of the senators Thrasea Paetus and Barea Soranus (*Annals* 16.23–4; *Acta Fratrum Arvalium* in Smallwood, *Documents Illustrating the Principates of Gaius, Claudius and Nero*, no. 25). It is hard to believe that Tacitus would have failed to describe the visit and the crowning of Tiridates (Suetonius, *Nero* 13; Dio 63.1.2–6.3). Nor would the historian have missed the chance to describe the events of the Greek tour, during which Nero rescheduled many of the traditional festivals, in order to be able to win all the crowns in the single year AD 66–67. We should also have had Tacitus' account of Nero's extravagant and eccentric triumph on his return from Greece. He held four different processions: at Naples, where he had first performed; at Antium, where he was born; at his villa at Alba Longa, once the site of the city founded by his ancestor Ascanius; and finally, at Rome. Here he deliberately mixed elements of the Roman military triumph with the Greek celebration for victors in the sacred games, ending up at the Temple of Apollo on the Palatine, the god of artists, rather than the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline, the god of Roman military victories (Suetonius, *Nero* 24–5; Dio 63.14; 20).

Tacitus, as we said, saw Nero as a climax of Julio-Claudian excesses. As Hutchinson (1993: 158) writes:

> Nero presents an extreme of cruelty and crime, but also of sordidness and absurdity; Tacitus' account of him often depicts degradation and displays humour – though with the loftiness of supreme contempt. Yet it seems apparent that the Neronian books were meant also to possess a terrible and climactic extremity.

And he points to the historian's explicit comparison, at *Annals* 14.63.2, of Octavia's exile with the exiling of Agrippina the Elder by Tiberius and that of Julia Livilla by Claudius, both of which are deemed to be much less cruel. But, though Tacitus at *Annals* 16.16 picks up and enhances from his account of Tiberius (*Annals* 4.32–3) the motif of wearying the reader with a dreary recital of domestic slaughter, he was too good an artist just to have given, as the *Annals* progressed, more copious and more shocking examples of the same. Instead, with each emperor, he highlights a different characteristic form of tyranny and a different type of narrative for each. Thus, with Tiberius we have an intelligent and devious ruler, hypocritically pretending to discourage sycophancy, just as the system of the Principate itself falsely pretends to continue republican liberty. And the narrative of the first six books appropriately abounds in examples of awkward attempts by some brave souls to expose the emperor's hypocrisy. With Gaius, though we have lost the account, Tacitus reveals that the theme was not "dissimulation," but "simulation" (*Annals* 6.45.3): so not just a gloomy pretence of not doing things, but the heady excitement of pretending to restore freedom, soon transformed into a bloodbath followed by assassination. With Claudius, we have a manipulated ruler, untrained for political life, who can be duped and intimidated by his slaves and freedmen and also by his wives. To provide relief from the narrative of the first two reigns, the Claudian books take on at times the character of farce. As with the other emperors, things get worse as Nero's reign goes on, but here we have a distinctive contrast: first, the young ruler, acting under tutelage and reciting his lines as rehearsed, and later the irresponsible aesthete, finally getting to play the role of *princeps* as he conceived it – a piece of pure theatre, until he loses any real grasp of the difference between illusion and reality. In conformity with this conception, Tacitus' set pieces in the Neronian books become more and more elaborate dramas and tableaux.

Nero is even histrionic in his crimes and his generosity. In the drama of Agrippina's murder, her maid impersonates her, thereby revealing the murderous intentions of the ship's crew (*Annals* 14.5); then, after Agrippina has pretended not to know that the shipwreck was no accident, Nero stages an attempt on his life by her messenger (*scaenam ultro criminis parat*, *Annals* 14.6–7). Then there is the tragedy of Octavia, accused of adultery, then recalled amid scenes of popular protest where the crowds overturn her rival Poppaea's statues and carry Octavia's on their shoulders; then, in a rapid change of fortune, Poppaea is reinstated, falls at Nero's feet, and pleads to have her rival removed (*Annals* 14.60–61). Next we have the spectacle of the Christians, in whom Nero found a scapegoat to blame for the Great Fire of July 64. Tacitus underlines the emperor's determination to turn this into a show, not only by his use of the word *spectaculum*, but by his emphasis on the chariot race that Nero provided as part of the entertainment, dressing up as a charioteer and mingling with the crowd. The sympathy of the spectators was, however, with the victims, he says, because they realized that this was not so much punishment as sadism (*Annals* 15.44.4–5).

Nero's upper-class opponents are also actors, having been encouraged and trained to appear on stage by the emperor. So, as Woodman (1993) shows, Tacitus depicts the Pisonian conspirators as consciously enacting a drama, in fact as re-enacting the murder of Julius Caesar (*Annals* 15.48–74). This is followed by Seneca's re-enactment of the death of Socrates (*Annals* 15.60.2–65).

As to Nero's generosity, that was not only extravagant but histrionic. When he made his hare-brained proposal in AD 58 to abolish indirect taxes in Italy and the provinces, he described it as "the noblest gift to the human race" (*Annals* 13.50.2). Nero was still only 20 then, and on that occasion wiser counsels prevailed. But Tacitus' account looks ahead, to the gift he was to proclaim nine years later in AD 67, when he could not be stopped. One can only guess how Tacitus would have handled the climax of the Greek tour, when Nero performed his elaborate re-enactment of the liberation of Greece by Flamininus, two and a half centuries earlier. Tacitus may well have produced some shortened version of the emperor's pronouncement (in Latin, of course).

The Pace of Tacitus' Narrative

One way in which Tacitus highlights Nero's increasing theatricality is by slowing the pace of his narrative and making his own set pieces longer and longer. Thus, whereas the death of Britannicus in *Annals* 13 takes four and a half chapters, the murder of Agrippina in *Annals* 14 takes up 11 chapters; even the Octavia affair takes five, and the pathos and horror of the account make it seem longer (see Buckley in this volume on Tacitus and the pseudo-Senecan *Octavia*). Then in *Annals* 15, the Great Fire occupies eight chapters, and the Pisonian conspiracy of 65 takes 27 – the longest single episode in the whole of the extant *Annals*, and the longest by far in the later books (Woodman (1993) 104). In *Annals* 16 Tacitus spends more than 34 chapters on one year, from the spring of AD 65 to the spring of AD 66, i.e. half of a very long book; and, of that, 15 chapters are lavished on the trials of Thrasea Paetus and Barea Soranus: we may compare the mere nine (*Annals* 3.11–19) that he gave to the notorious trial under Tiberius of Gnaeus Calpurnius Piso, the alleged murderer of the heir apparent. One cannot imagine Tacitus giving a less extended treatment to the crowning of Tiridates or to the Greek tour and the liberation of Greece in what was to follow but is now lost.

When the work as we have it breaks off in chapter 35 of *Annals* 16, Tacitus has still not treated these later events, nor the Jewish War, nor the death of Domitius Corbulo (one of Tacitus' heroes) in AD 66, nor the revolt of Vindex and its suppression in the March of AD 68, nor yet the death of Nero on June 9 that year. Given the leisurely pace at which *Annals* 16 is moving, it is hard not to agree with Ronald Syme that Tacitus cannot have finished his account of Nero in that book. It is then tempting to accept Syme's theory of hexads, groups of six books, and to assume that Nero's reign covered six books, giving the *Annals* a total of 18 (Syme (1958) 263–6, 686–7).

This is not the place for a discussion of the architecture of the *Annals*; but, given a total of six books for Nero, Tacitus could even have gone past Nero's death in June, down to the end of the year AD 68, as is suggested by one proleptic passage (*Annals* 15.72), where Tacitus looks forward to further mention of the Prefect of the Praetorian Guard Nymphidius Sabinus "who will play a part in the Roman disasters." Though that might just allude to Nymphidius' desertion of Nero for Galba, which ensured Galba's triumph, the most obvious way to take "Roman disasters" is as a reference to the continuous series of *coups d'état* that followed Nero's death, especially as Nymphidius' own claim to the throne was based on his supposed descent from Gaius, which Tacitus goes on to recount. That would show that Tacitus brought the *Annals* up to the point where his earlier work, the *Histories*, had started. In that case, he would have been returning to the practice of the early section of the *Annals*, where the ending of books coincided with the

end of a consular year, favoring in this the annalistic principle over the regnal principle that dominates the extant Claudian and Neronian books, which end at significant events for the reign, even if they occur in mid-year.

The possibility that the *Annals* exhibited such ring composition is important for understanding Tacitus' view of the historical significance of Nero's reign. It would mean, as Syme saw, that the mutinies near the beginning of *Annals* 1 had, as their counterpart at the end, the much more serious military insurrections of AD 68 (Syme (1958) 375). It would suit Tacitus' general outlook to have started the *Annals* with his cynical account of how Augustus came to power, seducing all with the "sweetness of peace," and to have ended it in the midst of bitter war and violent chaos. The civil war of AD 68–9 shattered the illusion of *pax et princeps* (peace under the *princeps*), the system's chief justification, as Tacitus had made clear (*Annals* 3.28.2, 4.33.2). The system was fragile. All it took to wreck it was one bad emperor, a youth too stupid and selfish to master a complex ideology and to play a role more subtle and demanding than that of any stage tragedy. Tacitus' readers would see that the last of the Julio-Claudians did not just kill himself: he nearly killed the Principate and the Roman empire.

Nero in the Fictional Dialogue *Nero*

Tacitus, Suetonius, and Cassius Dio, writing in historical genres, were constrained to tell the truth, however embellished with histrionic touches. But fiction, as Nero knew, has its own truth. So I conclude here with an episode from the dialogue *Nero*, ascribed to Lucian, already mentioned for its reservations about Nero's philhellenism. Whereas Suetonius can only say, "There is a tradition that Nero put the actor Paris to death as a dangerous rival" (*Nero* 54), this author, probably one of the Philostrati (Korver (1950)), puts into the mouth of the philosopher Musonius Rufus an extraordinarily vivid account of Nero's encounter with a tragic actor from Epirus during his Greek tour:

> Although custom ordains that there should be no comic or tragic contests at the Isthmus, Nero resolved to win a tragic victory. This contest was entered by several including the man from Epirus, who, having an excellent voice which had won him fame and admiration, was unusually ostentatious in *pretending* that he had set his heart on the crown of victory and would not give it up before Nero gave him ten talents as the price of victory. Nero was mad with rage; for he had been listening under the stage during the actual contest. When the Greeks shouted in applause of the Epirote, Nero sent his secretary to bid him yield to him. But he raised his voice and went on competing *as if* they were all free and equal, till Nero sent his own actors on to the platform *as though* they belonged to the act. For they held writing tablets of ivory and double ones indeed, poised before them like daggers and, forcing the Epirote against the pillar near-by, they smashed his throat in with the edge of their tablets. (Ps.-Lucian, *Nero* 9)

This episode has surrealism and sadism, as well as everything a modern theorist of theatricality could hope for. We have an actor taking to be real the pretence of free competition, and acting out a pretended desire to win. We have the emperor staging a fatal charade where actors actually murder another actor, using one of a playwright's instruments of composition, but not the usual one: it is the writing stylus that is a recognized weapon, at least in Rome (Seneca, *On Clemency* 1.15.1; Suetonius, *Divus Julius* 82.2; *Caligula* 28). What a comment on Nero's philhellenism, on his theatricality,

on his performing ambitions generally! The author powerfully suggests that they were inseparable from his tyranny.

Fascinating as the ancient historical writers, and this fictional writer, found Nero, they were not seduced by his engineering, his theatricality, his youth. They had lived under tyrants and knew that others could arise. We feel more secure, but perhaps even we should beware of promoting Nero from zero to hero!

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Index

Achaia, autonomy of: 125–6, 355; *see also* Corinth
Acraephia, decree of: 54–6, 471
Acte: 59, 105, 109, 111, 116
Actium, battle of: 45, 48, 226, 230, 410, 475
Africa: 48, 73–4, 84, 227, 229, 268
Agamemnon: *see* Senecan tragedy
Agamemnon (Petronius' *Satyrica*): 129, 250, 256
agriculture (technical writing): 276–88
Agrippa I: 94
Agrippa II: 99
Agrippa, Marcus: 3, 18, 45, 319
Agrippa (Roman prefect): 390
Agrippina the Elder: 36, 106, 477
Agrippina the Younger (Minor)
  in art: 49, 336–7, 344
  as author: 3, 46, 103
  celebrated in cult: 121–2, 124
  death: 2, 35–6, 37, 38, 50, 66, 112, 219
  in Octavia: 36, 219, 428
  physiognomy: 298
  as priestess: 125
  in Renaissance theater: 428, 439, 440
  role in Claudius' death: 179
  role in imperial court: 2, 104, 106–13, 333–7
  role in Nero's adoption by Claudius: 335
  and the temple of Divus Claudius: 124, 317
Alans: 88, 98, 99
Alexander the Great: 46, 57, 71, 97, 238, 29–300
amphitheater of Nero: 319–20, 326
Antony, Mark: 49, 57, 354
apocalyptic literature: 12, 388–400, 468
Apocolocyntosis: 2, 22, 49–50, 52, 53, 74, 78, 127, 144, 151–65, 170, 179, 189, 217, 263, 296, 316, 340–1, 342, 343
  and apotheosis: 152–66
  and Claudius: 2, 127, 152–66, 333
  and Drusilla: 158–61
  and intertextuality: 157–8, 159–60
  and irony: 159, 162–6
  and the Julio-Claudian family: 153–4, 158–62
  and *libertas* (freedom): 153–5
  and Menippean satire: 153–5, 162–3
  and Nero-Apollo: 165–6
  and Nero's youth: 152, 154, 162–6
  and performance: 156–8
  and panegyric: 156, 160, 162–6
  and pumpkins: 152–3
  and Saturnalia: 154–7
Apollo: 173–7, 182, 214, 224, 228, 230, 238, 246, 267, 371, 386, 476

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Aratus: 3, 46
Armenia, Armenian: 18, 32, 48, 49, 52, 85, 86–94, 97, 98, 99, 100
Arval Brothers: see *fratres Arvales*
Augustine: 56, 127, 385, 389–90, 393–4, 468
Augustus: 3, 17–18, 21–2, 33, 34, 40–1, 42, 45, 46, 47, 49–51, 54, 55, 58, 59, 65, 66, 68–9, 70–1, 74–5, 76, 84, 85, 91, 94, 96, 97, 102, 103–4, 107, 112, 113, 114, 119–20, 121–5, 130, 137, 154, 157, 158–60, 164, 165, 178, 181, 182, 217, 228–9, 262, 271, 316, 318, 322, 334–5, 342–5, 347, 348–9, 354, 409, 479
Aurelius, Marcus: 59, 135, 142, 145, 309, 396

Balbillus, Tiberius Claudius: 47, 297, 344, 345
Baths of Nero: plate 1; 3, 51, 319–22, 325–6, 329–30, 340, 355, 376, 469
Bellum Civile (= *Civil War*): 5, 7, 9, 10–11, 12, 171, 175, 177–8, 216, 225–40, 405–24
Bellum Iudaicum: *see* Josephus
Boeotia: 49, 54–6, 471
Bosporus: 89–90, 98–9
Boudicca: 32, 33–4, 41, 72, 85–6, 89, 99
Britannicus: 33, 34–6, 83–4, 108–9, 111, 144, 335, 344, 428, 439–40, 471, 478, 439
building program (Neronian): 314–31
Burrus, Afranius: 2, 19, 25, 29, 34, 40, 106, 110, 112–13, 143, 332, 333, 335, 339, 471, 475, 476

Caesar, Germanicus: 3, 18, 27, 46, 48, 97, 123, 349
Caesar, Julius: 18, 38, 41–2, 49, 83, 97, 125, 135, 158, 177–8, 182, 226–9, 231–2, 432, 477
Caesar, Tiberius: 18, 20, 27, 33, 36, 40–1, 46, 47, 54, 68–9, 70, 76, 84, 106, 122–3, 126, 157–8, 160, 317, 345, 364, 477, 478
Caligula (= Gaius): 18, 33, 38, 41, 48, 49, 68–9, 70, 83, 112, 120, 127, 152–4, 157, 160, 189–90, 217, 267, 321, 340, 353, 354, 396, 477, 478
Callimachus: 46, 173, 263, 265
Calpurnius Siculus, *Eclogues*: 2, 6, 156, 162, 176–84, 318–19, 334, 343, 356
Carmina Einsidlensia: 170–6, 343
Casa dell'Ara Massima: 366–8, 370–1, 375–8
Casa del Menandro: 372–4
Caspian Gates: 87, 96, 97–8
Cassius Dio: *see* Nero, in Cassius Dio
Caucasus: 85, 88–9, 96, 98–9
Christianity: 12, 304, 312–13, 388–400, 468
Cinthio/Cinzio: *see* Giraldi, Giambattista
Chersonesus: 89–90, 99
civil war: 6–7, 9–10, 12, 30, 66, 69, 73, 84, 107, 108, 139, 165, 171, 174–5, 177, 225–38, 295, 406, 412–19, 432, 475, 479
Civil War: *see Bellum Civile*
Claudia (daughter of Nero and Poppaea): 119–21
Claudius
  accession: 68–9
  adoption of Nero: 18, 32, 119, 179
  and the Bosporus: 89–90
  and Cybele: 128
  death: 39, 179–80, 343–4
  in *De Clementia*: 144
  and exile of Seneca: 191, 217, 477
  governance: 70, 74, 79, 105, 106, 156, 477
  in imperial cult: 120, 121, 123–4, 125, 154, 157–62, 317–18, 348
  invasion of Britain: 83–4, 86
  and Judaea: 94
  marriage to Agrippina: 48, 109
  in Renaissance drama: 440
coinage (Neronian): 332–62
Columella, *De Re Rustica*
  audience and reception: 284–7
  and Cato: 277–8, 282
  and genre: 277–8
  and Hesiod: 280, 282
  and manuscript tradition: 278
  structure and style: 279–80, 282–4
  and Virgil, *Georgics*: 278, 280–2
comets: 176, 178–9, 183, 298
Corbulo, Domitius: 32, 33–4, 38, 41, 69, 478
Corinth:
  and liberation of Achaia: 4, 45, 54–5, 472
  Nero's canal project: 57, 84, 323, 468
Corneille, Pierre: 438–9, 441
Cornutus, Lucius Annaeus: 5, 26, 134–7, 137–9, 140, 146–7, 227, 260, 265, 266, 267, 268–70, 272
Corrario, Gregorio: 429, 430–1

Cybele: 128, 131
Cynics, Cynicism: 20, 136, 153, 262

De Clementia: *see* Senecan philosophy
Domitia Lepida (Nero's aunt): 18, 48
Domitius Ahenobarbus, Cn. (Nero's father): 114, 124
Domus Aurea (= Golden House): plate 2, 3; 11, 19, 27, 51–3, 57, 59, 115, 119, 124, 297, 315–16, 318, 319, 323–30, 359, 377, 444, 448, 469, 474
Drusus: 18, 27

education (philosophical, rhetorical): 46, 55, 60, 129, 137–8, 140–1, 147, 226, 246, 249–50, 254–5, 259, 26, 276, 279, 281, 291, 305–8, 319, 351, 472
Egypt: 46–7, 73, 97–8, 231–2, 238, 345–6
emperor cult (at Rome): 119–25, 131, 158–9, 336, 343, 352, 388
emperor cult (outside Rome): 90, 125–6, 131
Epictetus: 105–6, 140–1, 142, 147, 303, 306–7, 312
Epicureanism: 135, 136, 147, 194, 227, 237, 264, 269, 290
Ethiopia: 96–7, 99–100, 298–300

Flamininus, T. Quinctius: 3, 45, 55, 56, 472, 478
fratres Arvales (= Arval Brothers): 120–5

Gaius: *see* Caligula
Galba: 36, 37, 90, 97, 304, 307, 468, 475, 478
Garnier, Robert: 430, 432, 437
Giraldi, Giambattista (= Cinzio/Cinthio): 431, 437, 440, 441
Golden Age: 2, 22, 50–3, 59, 152, 161, 164, 171, 175, 177–9, 227–8, 329, 340–1, 342–3, 349, 434
Great Fire, the: 3–4, 26, 31, 34, 40, 115, 296, 314–15, 317–18, 321, 322, 374, 477
Greece, Greek: 3, 4, 19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 31, 33, 39, 40, 46–59, 75, 76, 79, 84, 85, 89, 96, 99, 104–5, 114, 116, 125–6, 127, 135, 137–8, 140–1, 147, 175, 179, 192, 204, 207, 214, 217–19, 232, 242–5, 247, 262–3, 266, 270, 276, 282–3, 289, 289, 293, 303–13, 319–20, 348, 352, 353, 354, 355–6, 357–8
Greek identity: 141, 472–3: *see also* Nero, and philhellenism
"Grotesque," the: plate 4; 12, 239, 267, 363, 367–9, 371, 374, 378–9, 444–62
Gwinne, Matthew, *Nero: A New Tragedy*: 440
Gymnasium of Nero: plate 1; 319–21, 328–9, 354, 357

Hadrian, Emperor: 33, 38, 55, 103, 339, 349–50, 357–8
Hercules:
  in *Apocolocyntosis*: 159–63
  in *Bellum Civile*: 229–30
  Nero as: 21, 25
  in statuary: 351–2
Hercules Furens: *see* Senecan tragedy
Hercules Oetaeus: *see* Senecan tragedy
Heywood, Jasper: 425–6, 430, 432–3, 442
Homer: 7, 138, 163, 173–4, 234, 244–8, 249, 251–2, 305, 310, 371
Hughes, Thomas: 433–4, 437

Isis cult: 126–7, 131

Jonson, Ben: 438
Josephus
  Jewish Antiquities: 30, 68
  Jewish War (= *Bellum Iudaicum*): 40, 72, 84, 98, 99, 303, 312, 386
  Contra Appionem: 312

Kyd, Thomas: 435–6

Laus Pisonis: 182, 357, 358
Lucan: 7, 9–12, 25–6, 50, 71, 84, 88, 97–8, 128, 137–9, 146, 160, 163–4, 172, 174–5, 178–80, 182–3, 185, 216, 258, 260, 265, 267, 270, 276, 303, 344, 356, 378, 472
  and *Aeneid*: 227–9
  and Caesar, Pompey, Cato: 231–4
  life: 225–6
  narrator and audience: 234–6
  reception: 405–22, 426, 454
  and Roman values: 229–31, 236
  style: 237–8
Lucretius: 135, 160, 194, 226, 227, 280, 290
Lusus Troiae: 17–19

luxury: 40, 51–2, 57, 193–4, 232, 249, 255, 266, 284, 293–6, 300, 323–5, 327–8, 340, 355, 356–8

Martial: 3, 46, 78, 129, 189, 239, 266, 270, 317, 318, 349, 351, 469
Menippean satire: 153–5, 162–3, 243–7, 264, 280, 303
Messalina (wife of Claudius): 108–9, 349, 440
metapoetics, metatheater: 7–8, 172, 208, 211, 256
Mithridates (VIII): 90, 94, 98
Mummius, Lucius: 3, 45

Naples: 19–20, 24, 39, 40, 48, 51, 58, 95, 246, 326, 445, 470, 472, 476
Natural History: *see* Pliny the Elder
Nero
  as actor: 21, 24–5, 27, 53, 111, 115, 218–19, 470–1, 477, 479
  and Alexander the Great: 49, 97–9, 299
  and Apollo: 58–9, 85, 92, 95, 97, 125, 138–9, 156, 162–6, 175–6, 180–1, 183, 184, 230, 328, 341–4, 347–58
  and Augustus: 21–2, 25, 34, 47, 49–51, 52–4, 57–8, 69, 70–1, 97, 111–14, 119, 158–60, 164, 165, 178, 181, 182, 334–5, 336, 342–5, 347–9, 354
  as benefactor: 4, 46, 53–6, 259
  in Cassius Dio: 31–3 and passim.
  as charioteer: 3, 19–20, 22, 25, 27, 39–40, 45, 50, 53–5, 57–9, 84, 95, 99, 114, 322, 328, 339, 343, 348, 355–6, 358, 387, 470–1, 473–5, 477
  and the coronation of Tiridates: 9, 39, 48–9, 52, 322, 347, 349–50, 474, 476
  death: 6, 30, 32, 36, 40–1, 56–7, 59, 85, 112, 116, 388, 395, 396, 397, 473–4, 478
  as Domitius Ahenobarbus: 18, 35, 59
  and the *Encomium Neronis*: 396–7
  and the eulogy of Claudius: 26, 33, 35, 344
  in Judaeo-Christian tradition: 385–400
  false Neros: 41, 85, 386, 468
  and foreign policy: 83–101
  and Gwinne's *Nero: A New Tragedy*: 440
  and the *Nero redivivus*/Antichrist myth: 12, 388–400, 468
  and philhellenism: 45–6, 54–5, 58–60, 76, 99, 469, 472, 480
  as poet: 4–6, 26–8
  as priest: 118–19, 123–4
  and pseudo-Lucian's "Nero": 479–80
  and spectacle (Juvenalia, Neroniana): 8–9, 24, 31, 39–40, 45, 50–1, 53, 95, 114, 180, 194, 210, 226, 233, 235–6, 239, 246, 250, 259, 292, 321, 435, 441, 470, 474, 477
  in Suetonius: 38–41 and passim.
  and the Sun: 19, 22, 48–57, 59, 92, 95, 97, 119, 125, 162, 164, 165–6, 180, 259, 328, 341–52, 355, 474
  in Tacitus: 33–8 and passim.
  as usurper: 35 (*see also* Britannicus)
Nile, the: 46–7, 96–7, 193, 232, 238, 290, 292, 297, 299

Octavia: *see* Senecan tragedy
Octavia, Claudia (wife of Nero): 32, 33, 35–7, 38, 107–8, 109, 111–12, 123, 218–19, 336, 471, 477, 478
Octavian: *see* Augustus
Oedipus: 21, 25
Oedipus: *see* Senecan tragedy
Olbia: 89, 99
On Anger: *see* Senecan philosophy
On Benefits: *see* Senecan philosophy
On Clemency: *see* Senecan philosophy
Oplontis (villa A): 365, 367–9, 371, 374, 378–9
otium: 4, 46, 51–2, 322, 339–40, 353, 355–8
Ovid: 27, 171, 173, 238, 426, 454
  Ars Amatoria: 338
  Metamorphoses: 52, 158–9, 180, 212–13, 226
  Fasti: 128
  Ex Ponto: 217

Panegyricus: *see* Pliny the Younger
Pannonia: 18, 45
Panofsky: 363–4, 379
Paris (actor): 20, 48, 67, 470, 479
Parthians, the: 6, 11, 18, 22, 49, 52, 53, 56, 84, 85, 90–6, 99, 100, 233, 318, 328, 347, 349
Peloponnese: 4, 54, 55, 57, 472
periodization: 1, 12, 363–4

Perseus and Andromeda (in wall painting): 372–4
Persius: 3, 5–6, 26, 71, 121, 137, 139, 146, 156, 181–2
  and contemporary society: 262–7
  imagery: 269–71
  life: 265
  persona: 260-, 269–71
  and Stoicism: 267–8
perspective: 363–5, 367, 369, 375, 377–8
Petronius (author of *Satyrica*): 71, 242
Petronius (expedition of): 97, 105
Petronius, *Satyrica*
  and audience: 253–5
  and authorial voice: 246–7
  and education: 249–50, 255–7
  Encolpius: 129–30, 242–7, 372
  Eumolpus: 242, 243, 248, 251, 253–7
  and genre: 243–7
  and intertextuality: 157, 247, 251–3, 255
  and plot: 245–6
  and reconstruction: 244–5
  and religion/superstition: 129–30
  Trimalchio: 8–9, 10, 12, 129–30, 243–4, 249–51, 255–6, 372, 376
Piso, G. Calpurnius: *see* Pisonian conspiracy
Pisonian conspiracy: 9, 37, 38, 40, 41, 66, 139, 146, 182, 183, 226, 271–2, 347, 357–8, 475, 477, 478
Plato, Platonism: 8, 40, 136–6, 141, 147, 191, 194–5, 255–6, 267, 306, 307–8
Plautus, Rubellius: 69, 137, 139, 147
Pliny the Elder (author of *Natural History*): 289–300
  on the Caspian Gates: 97–8
  on luxury: 292–5
  on Nero: 52, 53, 59, 184, 296–9
  on the Nile: 96–7, 298
  on painting: 363, 374–5, 377
  and Seneca: 189, 289–300
  works: 29–30, 290–1
Pliny the Younger (author of *Panegyricus*, *Letters*): 68, 77, 123, 157, 160, 175
portraiture (Neronian): 332–62
  beards: 336–9
  hairstyle: 332–40, 349, 351
Praetorian Guard: 4, 37, 66–7, 68, 69, 70, 96, 105, 110, 296, 321, 327–8, 334, 471, 478
quinquennium: 2, 34, 39
Quintilian (author of *Institutio Oratoria*): 23–4, 30, 148, 188–90, 261, 265, 339

Racine, Jean: 438–40, 441
reception
  of Lucan: 405–24
  of Seneca: 425–43
  of the Golden House (Domus Aurea): 444–69
Rennaissance (Neronian): 5–6
rhetoric, rhetoricity: 11–12, 137, 143–4, 146, 188–90, 198, 205, 208–11, 238, 249, 280, 282–5, 292–4, 303–5, 406, 417, 426–7, 436, 441, 469, 472
Rufus, Cluvius: 24, 29, 30, 33
Rufus, Musonius: 136–7, 140–2, 146–7, 304, 307–8, 311, 313
Rusticus, Fabius: 29, 30, 31, 33

Sabina, Poppaea: 32, 36, 57, 103, 108, 109, 114, 119–20, 121, 297, 318, 350, 366, 395, 428, 440, 470, 477
Scaliger, Julius Caesar: 407–9, 418
sculpture (Neronian): 332–62
Second Sophistic: 3, 47, 60, 140, 142, 147, 303, 358
Seneca, *Apocolocyntosis*: *see Apocolocyntosis*
Seneca (the Elder): 23, 27, 191
Seneca (the Younger):
  and apocryphal correspondence with Paul: 190, 311–12, 400
  as Nero's tutor: 2, 31, 47, 49, 53, 106, 146–7, 154, 191, 204, 341, 428
  and Pisonian conspiracy: 271–2
  and suicide: 37, 395, 477
  in government: 2, 4–5, 6, 19, 25–6, 34, 40, 49, 86, 106, 109, 111, 112–13, 153–4, 158, 191, 333–4, 340, 344, 355, 409
  in European Renaissance reception: 424–42
Senecan philosophy: 126–7, 134–7, 140–7, 189–203, 204
  De Clementia (= *On Clemency*): 2, 66, 143–7, 154, 161–2, 165, 195, 218, 219, 297, 355, 479
  De Ira (= *On Anger*): 2, 104, 145–6, 147, 153, 166, 197, 198, 207, 217, 296
  De Superstitione (= *On Superstition*): 126–7

Senecan philosophy (*cont'd*)
Natural Questions (= *Quaestiones Naturales*): 5, 26, 96, 136, 175, 192–3, 203, 289–301
De Beneficiis (= *On Benefits*): 48, 70, 136, 155, 166, 195, 196, 201
Dialogi (= *Dialogues*): 65, 66, 189, 190, 192, 194–8
Epistulae Morales (= *Epistles*, *Letters*): 8, 20–1, 59, 70, 135, 136, 142, 144, 146, 166, 189, 190, 192, 193, 198–202, 255, 196, 313, 392
Senecan tragedy
Agamemnon: 204, 212, 214, 217, 427, 430, 433, 436
and Greek tragedy: 207–9, 216–17
and intertextuality: 211–16, 218
Medea: 204, 205–10, 213, 214, 217, 416, 434, 438
Hercules Furens: 163, 204, 205, 214–17, 218, 425, 430, 433, 439
Hercules Oetaeus: 204, 216, 430
Oedipus: 10, 204, 211, 213, 217, 429, 430
Octavia: 35–7, 38, 40, 112, 139, 157, 205, 218–19, 428, 430, 439, 440, 478
and performance: 212
Phoenissae: 204, 217, 218, 430, 438
and rhetoric: 208–9
and the role of the chorus: 218, 219
and Senecan philosophy: 205–9
Thyestes: 7–11, 87, 204, 211–14, 217–18, 425–8, 430, 431, 433
Troades: 5, 26, 213, 217, 218, 425, 427, 428, 429, 430, 432, 438
Senecanism: 429–41
Shakespeare, William: 225, 396, 397, 436
Sibylline oracles (ancient): 119, 174, 177, 386
Sibylline oracles (Jewish): 386–9, 392, 393, 394, 468
skeptics, skepticism: 135, 293
space (technical vs. metaphorical): 377
spectacle, spectacularity: 8–10, 45, 52–3, 95, 114, 180, 194, 210, 226, 233, 235–6, 240–5, 259, 292, 321, 435, 441, 470, 474, 477
Statius: 3, 46, 454
Thebaid: 226, 344, 417
Silvae: 98, 99, 182, 189, 225–6, 415
Stoicism: 46, 49, 68, 127, 134–47, 188–202, 204, 207–8, 210, 217, 226, 232, 233–4, 236, 259–60, 261, 264, 267–70, 271, 288–91, 303, 307–8
Studley, John: 430, 433

Temple of Divus Claudius: plate 1; 124, 315–17, 347
theater (in architecture): 369–70, 372, 376, 380
Tigranes: 92–3
Tiridates: 9, 31, 33, 39, 48–9, 52–3, 91–6, 98, 99, 100, 321, 346–7, 348–50, 473–4, 476, 478
Tyras: 89, 99

Vespasian: 25, 30, 42, 69, 72, 77, 89, 97, 98, 139, 159, 288, 295–6, 306, 311, 316, 325, 349–50, 353, 366, 386, 468, 473
Villa A at Oplontis: 374–8, 365–8
Vindex, Julius Caesar: 32, 35, 37, 72–3, 97, 478
Virgil: 17, 27, 46, 58, 5, 171–4, 176, 181–2, 269, 454
Eclogues: 164, 172, 175–6, 177–9, 342–3
Georgics: 174, 177, 181–2, 184, 210, 277–82
Aeneid: 50, 58, 75, 157, 177, 213–14, 227–9, 234, 237–8, 248–9, 250–2
Gnat: 225
reception of: 407–9, 411, 417–18, 419, 426
Vologaeses: 91, 92–6, 98, 99

wall painting (Neronian): 263–83